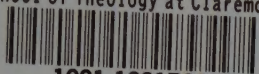


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THE

# CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

A SERIES OF ARTICLES FROM  
THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

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BY

COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL, 3-42  
JUDGE JEREMIAH S. BLACK, 23  
PROF. GEORGE P. FISHER. 94.

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# THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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## I.

BY ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

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In the presence of eternity the mountains are as transient as the clouds.

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A PROFOUND change has taken place in the world of thought. The pews are trying to set themselves somewhat above the pulpit. The layman discusses theology with the minister, and smiles. Christians excuse themselves for belonging to the church, by denying a part of the creed. The idea is abroad that they who know the most of nature believe the least about theology. The sciences are regarded as infidels, and facts as scoffers. Thousands of most excellent people avoid churches, and, with few exceptions, only those attend prayer-meetings who wish to be alone. The pulpit is losing because the people are growing.

Of course it is still claimed that we are a Christian people, indebted to something called Christianity for all the progress we have made. There is still a vast difference of opinion as to what Christianity really is, although many warring sects have been discussing that question, with fire and sword, through centuries of creed and crime. Every new sect has been denounced at its birth as illegitimate, as a something born out of orthodox wedlock, and that should have been allowed to perish on the steps



where it was found. Of the relative merits of the various denominations, it is sufficient to say that each claims to be right. Among the evangelical churches there is a substantial agreement upon what they consider the fundamental truths of the gospel. These fundamental truths, as I understand them, are :

That there is a personal God, the creator of the material universe; that he made man of the dust, and woman from part of the man; that the man and woman were tempted by the devil; that they were turned out of the garden of Eden; that, about fifteen hundred years afterward, God's patience having been exhausted by the wickedness of mankind, he drowned his children with the exception of eight persons; that afterward he selected from their descendants Abraham, and through him the Jewish people; that he gave laws to these people, and tried to govern them in all things; that he made known his will in many ways; that he wrought a vast number of miracles; that he inspired men to write the Bible; that, in the fullness of time, it having been found impossible to reform mankind, this God came upon earth as a child born of the Virgin Mary; that he lived in Palestine; that he preached for about three years, going from place to place, occasionally raising the dead, curing the blind and the halt; that he was crucified—for the crime of blasphemy, as the Jews supposed, but that, as a matter of fact, he was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of all who might have faith in him; that he was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he now is, making intercession for his followers; that he will forgive the sins of all who believe on him, and that those who do not believe will be consigned to the dungeons of eternal pain. These—it may be with the addition of the sacraments of Baptism and the Last Supper—constitute what is generally known as the Christian religion.

It is most cheerfully admitted that a vast number of people not only believe these things, but hold them in exceeding reverence, and imagine them to be of the utmost importance to mankind. They regard the Bible as the only light that God has given for the guidance of his children; that it is the one star in nature's sky—the foundation of all morality, of all law, of all order, and of all individual and national progress. They regard it as the only means we have for ascertaining the will of God, the origin of man, and the destiny of the soul.

It is needless to inquire into the causes that have led so many people to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. In my

opinion, they were and are mistaken, and the mistake has hindered, in countless ways, the civilization of man. The Bible has been the fortress and defense of nearly every crime. No civilized country could reënaact its laws, and in many respects its moral code is abhorrent to every good and tender man. It is admitted that many of its precepts are pure, that many of its laws are wise and just, and that many of its statements are absolutely true.

Without desiring to hurt the feelings of anybody, I propose to give a few reasons for thinking that a few passages, at least, in the Old Testament are the product of a barbarous people.

In all civilized countries it is not only admitted, but it is passionately asserted, that slavery is and always was a hideous crime; that a war of conquest is simply murder; that polygamy is the enslavement of woman, the degradation of man, and the destruction of home; that nothing is more infamous than the slaughter of decrepit men, of helpless women, and of prattling babes; that captured maidens should not be given to soldiers; that wives should not be stoned to death on account of their religious opinions, and that the death penalty ought not to be inflicted for a violation of the Sabbath. We know that there was a time, in the history of almost every nation, when slavery, polygamy, and wars of extermination were regarded as divine institutions; when women were looked upon as beasts of burden, and when, among some people, it was considered the duty of the husband to murder the wife for differing with him on the subject of religion. Nations that entertain these views to-day are regarded as savage, and, probably, with the exception of the South Sea islanders, the Feejees, some citizens of Delaware, and a few tribes in Central Africa, no human beings can be found degraded enough to agree upon these subjects with the Jehovah of the ancient Jews. The only evidence we have, or can have, that a nation has ceased to be savage is the fact that it has abandoned these doctrines. To every one, except the theologian, it is perfectly easy to account for the mistakes, atrocities, and crimes of the past, by saying that civilization is a slow and painful growth; that the moral perceptions are cultivated through ages of tyranny, of want, of crime, and of heroism; that it requires centuries for man to put out the eyes of self and hold in lofty and in equal poise the scales of justice; that conscience is born of suffering; that mercy is the child of the imagination—of the power to put oneself in the sufferer's place, and that man advances only as he becomes acquainted with

his surroundings, with the mutual obligations of life, and learns to take advantage of the forces of nature.

But the believer in the inspiration of the Bible is compelled to declare that there was a time when slavery was right—when men could buy, and women could sell, their babes. He is compelled to insist that there was a time when polygamy was the highest form of virtue; when wars of extermination were waged with the sword of mercy; when religious toleration was a crime, and when death was the just penalty for having expressed an honest thought. He must maintain that Jehovah is just as bad now as he was four thousand years ago, or that he was just as good then as he is now, but that human conditions have so changed that slavery, polygamy, religious persecutions, and wars of conquest are now perfectly devilish. Once they were right—once they were commanded by God himself; now, they are prohibited. There has been such a change in the conditions of man that, at the present time, the devil is in favor of slavery, polygamy, religious persecution, and wars of conquest. That is to say, the devil entertains the same opinion to-day that Jehovah held four thousand years ago, but in the meantime Jehovah has remained exactly the same—changeless and incapable of change.

We find that other nations beside the Jews had similar laws and ideas; that they believed in and practiced slavery and polygamy, murdered women and children, and exterminated their neighbors to the extent of their power. It is not claimed that they received a revelation. It is admitted that they had no knowledge of the true God. And yet, by a strange coincidence, they practiced the same crimes, of their own motion, that the Jews did by the command of Jehovah. From this it would seem that man can do wrong without a special revelation.

It will hardly be claimed, at this day, that the passages in the Bible upholding slavery, polygamy, war, and religious persecution are evidences of the inspiration of that book. Suppose that there had been nothing in the Old Testament upholding these crimes, would any modern Christian suspect that it was not inspired, on account of the omission? Suppose that there had been nothing in the Old Testament but laws in favor of these crimes, would any intelligent Christian now contend that it was the work of the true God? If the devil had inspired a book, will some believer in the doctrine of inspiration tell us in what respect, on the subjects of slavery, polygamy, war, and



liberty, it would have differed from some parts of the Old Testament? Suppose that we should now discover a Hindu book of equal antiquity with the Old Testament, containing a defense of slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution, would we regard it as evidence that the writers were inspired by an infinitely wise and merciful God? As most other nations at that time practiced these crimes, and as the Jews would have practiced them all, even if left to themselves, one can hardly see the necessity of any inspired commands upon these subjects. Is there a believer in the Bible who does not wish that God, amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, had distinctly said to Moses that man should not own his fellow-man; that women should not sell their babes; that men should be allowed to think and investigate for themselves, and that the sword should never be unsheathed to shed the blood of honest men? Is there a believer, in the world, who would not be delighted to find that every one of these infamous passages are interpolations, and that the skirts of God were never reddened by the blood of maiden, wife, or babe? Is there a believer who does not regret that God commanded a husband to stone his wife to death for suggesting the worship of the sun or moon? Surely, the light of experience is enough to tell us that slavery is wrong, that polygamy is infamous, and that murder is not a virtue. No one will now contend that it was worth God's while to impart the information to Moses, or to Joshua, or to anybody else, that the Jewish people might purchase slaves of the heathen, or that it was their duty to exterminate the natives of the Holy Land. The deists have contended that the Old Testament is too cruel and barbarous to be the work of a wise and loving God. To this, the theologians have replied, that nature is just as cruel; that the earthquake, the volcano, the pestilence and storm, are just as savage as the Jewish God; and to my mind this is a perfect answer.

Suppose that we knew that after "inspired" men had finished the Bible, the devil got possession of it, and wrote a few passages; what part of the sacred Scriptures would Christians now pick out as being probably his work? Which of the following passages would naturally be selected as having been written by the devil—"Love thy neighbor as thyself," or, "Kill all the males among the little ones, and kill every woman; but all the women children keep alive for yourselves"?

It may be that the best way to illustrate what I have said of the Old Testament is to compare some of the supposed teachings of Jehovah with those of persons who never read an "inspired" line, and who lived and died without having received the light of revelation. Nothing can be more suggestive than a comparison of the ideas of Jehovah—the inspired words of the one claimed to be the infinite God, as recorded in the Bible—with those that have been expressed by men who, all admit, received no help from heaven.

In all ages of which any record has been preserved, there have been those who gave their ideas of justice, charity, liberty, love, and law. Now, if the Bible is really the work of God, it should contain the grandest and sublimest truths. It should, in all respects, excel the works of man. Within that book should be found the best and loftiest definitions of justice; the truest conceptions of human liberty; the clearest outlines of duty; the tenderest, the highest, and the noblest thoughts,—not that the human mind has produced, but that the human mind is capable of receiving. Upon every page should be found the luminous evidence of its divine origin. Unless it contains grander and more wonderful things than man has written, we are not only justified in saying, but we are compelled to say, that it was written by no being superior to man. It may be said that it is unfair to call attention to certain bad things in the Bible, while the good are not so much as mentioned. To this it may be replied that a divine being would not put bad things in a book. Certainly a being of infinite intelligence, power, and goodness could never fall below the ideal of "depraved and barbarous" man. It will not do, after we find that the Bible upholds what we now call crimes, to say that it is not verbally inspired. If the words are not inspired, what is? It may be said that the thoughts are inspired. But this would include only the thoughts expressed without words. If ideas are inspired, they must be contained in and expressed only by inspired words; that is to say, the arrangement of the words, with relation to each other, must have been inspired. For the purpose of this perfect arrangement, the writers, according to the Christian world, were inspired. Were some sculptor inspired of God to make a statue perfect in its every part, we would not say that the marble was inspired, but the statue—the relation of part to part, the married harmony of form and function. The language, the words, take the place of the marble, and it is the arrangement of these words that Chris-



tians claim to be inspired. If there is one uninspired word,—that is, one word in the wrong place, or a word that ought not to be there,—to that extent the Bible is an uninspired book. The moment it is admitted that some words are not, in their arrangement as to other words, inspired, then, unless with absolute certainty these words can be pointed out, a doubt is cast on all the words the book contains. If it was worth God's while to make a revelation to man at all, it was certainly worth his while to see to it that it was correctly made. He would not have allowed the ideas and mistakes of pretended prophets and designing priests to become so mingled with the original text that it is impossible to tell where he ceased and where the priests and prophets began. Neither will it do to say that God adapted his revelation to the prejudices of mankind. Of course it was necessary for an infinite being to adapt his revelation to the intellectual capacity of man; but why should God confirm a barbarian in his prejudices? Why should he fortify a heathen in his crimes? If a revelation is of any importance whatever, it is to eradicate prejudices from the human mind. It should be a lever with which to raise the human race. Theologians have exhausted their ingenuity in finding excuses for God. It seems to me that they would be better employed in finding excuses for men. They tell us that the Jews were so cruel and ignorant that God was compelled to justify, or nearly to justify, many of their crimes, in order to have any influence with them whatever. They tell us that if he had declared slavery and polygamy to be criminal, the Jews would have refused to receive the ten commandments. They insist that, under the circumstances, God did the best he could; that his real intention was to lead them along slowly, step by step, so that, in a few hundred years, they would be induced to admit that it was hardly fair to steal a babe from its mother's breast. It has always seemed reasonable that an infinite God ought to have been able to make man grand enough to know, even without a special revelation, that it is not altogether right to steal the labor, or the wife, or the child, of another. When the whole question is thoroughly examined, the world will find that Jehovah had the prejudices, the hatreds, and superstitions of his day.

If there is anything of value, it is liberty. Liberty is the air of the soul, the sunshine of life. Without it the world is a prison and the universe an infinite dungeon.

If the Bible is really inspired, Jehovah commanded the Jewish people to buy the children of the strangers that sojourned among them, and ordered that the children thus bought should be an inheritance for the children of the Jews, and that they should be bondmen and bondwomen forever. Yet Epictetus, a man to whom no revelation was ever made, a man whose soul followed only the light of nature, and who had never heard of the Jewish God, was great enough to say: "Will you not remember that your servants are by nature your brothers, the children of God? In saying that you have bought them, you look down on the earth, and into the pit, on the wretched law of men long since dead, but you see not the laws of the gods."

We find that Jehovah, speaking to his chosen people, assured them that their bondmen and their bondmaids must be "of the heathen that were round about them." "Of them," said Jehovah, "shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids." And yet Cicero, a pagan, Cicero, who had never been enlightened by reading the Old Testament, had the moral grandeur to declare: "They who say that we should love our fellow-citizens, but not foreigners, destroy the universal brotherhood of mankind, with which benevolence and justice would perish forever."

If the Bible is inspired, Jehovah, God of all worlds, actually said: "And if a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished; notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his money." And yet Zeno, founder of the Stoics, centuries before Christ was born, insisted that no man could be the owner of another, and that the title was bad, whether the slave had become so by conquest, or by purchase. Jehovah ordered a Jewish general to make war, and gave, among others, this command: "When the Lord thy God shall drive them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." And yet Epictetus, whom we have already quoted, gave this marvelous rule for the guidance of human conduct: "Live with thy inferiors as thou wouldst have thy superiors live with thee."

Is it possible, after all, that a being of infinite goodness and wisdom said: "I will heap mischief upon them; I will send mine arrows upon them; they shall be burned with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction. I will

send the tooth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling, also, with the man of gray hairs"; while Seneca, an uninspired Roman, said: "The wise man will not pardon any crime that ought to be punished, but he will accomplish, in a nobler way, all that is sought in pardoning. He will spare some and watch over some, because of their youth, and others on account of their ignorance. His clemency will not fall short of justice, but will fulfill it perfectly."

Can we believe that God ever said of any one: "Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow; let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places; let the extortioner catch all that he hath and let the stranger spoil his labor; let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children." If he ever said these words, surely he had never heard this line, this strain of music, from the Hindu: "Sweet is the lute to those who have not heard the prattle of their own children."

Jehovah, "from the clouds and darkness of Sinai," said to the Jews: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Contrast this with the words put by the Hindu in the mouth of Brahma: "I am the same to all mankind. They who honestly serve other gods, involuntarily worship me. I am he who partaketh of all worship, and I am the reward of all worshippers."

Compare these passages. The first, a dungeon where crawl the things begot of jealous slime; the other, great as the domed firmament inlaid with suns.

## II.

WAIVING the contradictory statements in the various books of the New Testament; leaving out of the question the history of the manuscripts; saying nothing about the errors in translation and the interpolations made by the fathers; and admitting, for the time being, that the books were all written at the

times claimed, and by the persons whose names they bear, the questions of inspiration, probability, and absurdity still remain.

As a rule, where several persons testify to the same transaction, while agreeing in the main points, they will disagree upon many minor things, and such disagreement upon minor matters is generally considered as evidence that the witnesses have not agreed among themselves upon the story they should tell. These differences in statement we account for from the facts that all did not see alike, that all did not have the same opportunity for seeing, and that all had not equally good memories. But when we claim that the witnesses were inspired, we must admit that he who inspired them did know exactly what occurred, and consequently there should be no contradiction, even in the minutest detail. The accounts should be not only substantially, but they should be actually, the same. It is impossible to account for any differences, or any contradictions, except from the weaknesses of human nature, and these weaknesses cannot be predicated of divine wisdom. Why should there be more than one correct account of anything? Why were four gospels necessary? One inspired record of all that happened ought to be enough.

One great objection to the Old Testament is the cruelty said to have been commanded by God, but all the cruelties recounted in the Old Testament ceased with death. The vengeance of Jehovah stopped at the portal of the tomb. He never threatened to avenge himself upon the dead; and not one word, from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse of Malachi, contains the slightest intimation that God will punish in another world. It was reserved for the New Testament to make known the frightful doctrine of eternal pain. It was the teacher of universal benevolence who rent the veil between time and eternity, and fixed the horrified gaze of man on the lurid gulfs of hell. Within the breast of non-resistance was coiled the worm that never dies.

One great objection to the New Testament is that it bases salvation upon belief. This, at least, is true of the Gospel according to John, and of many of the epistles. I admit that Matthew never heard of the atonement, and died utterly ignorant of the scheme of salvation. I also admit that Mark never dreamed that it was necessary for a man to be born again; that he knew nothing of the mysterious doctrine of regeneration, and that he never even suspected that it was necessary to believe anything. In the sixteenth chapter of Mark, we are told that "He that



believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned"; but this passage has been shown to be an interpolation, and, consequently, not a solitary word is found in the Gospel according to Mark upon the subject of salvation by faith. The same is also true of the Gospel of Luke. It says not one word as to the necessity of believing on Jesus Christ, not one word as to the atonement, not one word upon the scheme of salvation, and not the slightest hint that it is necessary to believe anything here in order to be happy hereafter.

And I here take occasion to say, that with most of the teachings of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke I most heartily agree. The miraculous parts must, of course, be thrown aside. I admit that the necessity of belief, the atonement, and the scheme of salvation are all set forth in the Gospel of John,—a gospel, in my opinion, not written until long after the others.

According to the prevailing Christian belief, the Christian religion rests upon the doctrine of the atonement. If this doctrine is without foundation, if it is repugnant to justice and mercy, the fabric falls. We are told that the first man committed a crime for which all his posterity are responsible,—in other words, that we are accountable, and can be justly punished for a sin we never in fact committed. This absurdity was the father of another, namely, that a man can be rewarded for a good action done by another. God, according to the modern theologians, made a law, with the penalty of eternal death for its infraction. All men, they say, have broken that law. In the economy of heaven, this law had to be vindicated. This could be done by damning the whole human race. Through what is known as the atonement, the salvation of a few was made possible. They insist that the law—whatever that is—demanded the extreme penalty, that justice called for its victims, and that even mercy ceased to plead. Under these circumstances, God, by allowing the innocent to suffer, satisfactorily settled with the law; and allowed a few of the guilty to escape. The law was satisfied with this arrangement. To carry out this scheme, God was born as a babe into this world. "He grew in stature and increased in knowledge." At the age of thirty-three, after having lived a life filled with kindness, charity, and nobility, after having practiced every virtue, he was sacrificed as an atonement for man. It is claimed that he actually took our place, and bore our sins and our guilt; that in this way the justice of God was satisfied, and that the

blood of Christ was an atonement, an expiation, for the sins of all who might believe on him.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, there was no remission of sin except through the shedding of blood. If a man committed certain sins, he must bring to the priest a lamb, a bullock, a goat, or a pair of turtle-doves. The priest would lay his hands upon the animal, and the sin of the man would be transferred. Then the animal would be killed in the place of the real sinner, and the blood thus shed and sprinkled upon the altar would be an atonement. In this way Jehovah was satisfied. The greater the crime, the greater the sacrifice—the more blood, the greater the atonement. There was always a certain ratio between the value of the animal and the enormity of the sin. The most minute directions were given about the killing of these animals, and about the sprinkling of their blood. Every priest became a butcher, and every sanctuary a slaughter-house. Nothing could be more utterly shocking to a refined and loving soul. Nothing could have been better calculated to harden the heart than this continual shedding of innocent blood. This terrible system is supposed to have culminated in the sacrifice of Christ. His blood took the place of all other. It is necessary to shed no more. The law at last is satisfied, satiated, surfeited. The idea that God wants blood is at the bottom of the atonement, and rests upon the most fearful savagery. How can sin be transferred from men to animals, and how can the shedding of the blood of animals atone for the sins of men?

The Church says that the sinner is in debt to God, and that the obligation is discharged by the Saviour. The best that can possibly be said of such a transaction is, that the debt is transferred, not paid. The truth is, that a sinner is in debt to the person he has injured. If a man injures his neighbor, it is not enough for him to get the forgiveness of God, but he must have the forgiveness of his neighbor. If a man puts his hand in the fire and God forgives him, his hand will smart exactly the same. You must, after all, reap what you sow. No god can give you wheat when you sow tares, and no devil can give you tares when you sow wheat.

There are in nature neither rewards nor punishments—there are consequences. The life of Christ is worth its example, its moral force, its heroism of benevolence.

To make innocence suffer is the greatest sin; how then is it possible to make the suffering of the innocent a justification for

the criminal? Why should a man be willing to let the innocent suffer for him? Does not the willingness show that he is utterly unworthy of the sacrifice? Certainly, no man would be fit for heaven who would consent that an innocent person should suffer for his sin. What would we think of a man who would allow another to die for a crime that he himself had committed? What would we think of a law that allowed the innocent to take the place of the guilty? Is it possible to vindicate a just law by inflicting punishment on the innocent? Would not that be a second violation instead of a vindication?

If there was no general atonement until the crucifixion of Christ, what became of the countless millions who died before that time? And it must be remembered that the blood shed by the Jews was not for other nations. Jehovah hated foreigners. The Gentiles were left without forgiveness. What has become of the millions who have died since, without having heard of the atonement? What becomes of those who have heard but have not believed? It seems to me that the doctrine of the atonement is absurd, unjust, and immoral. Can a law be satisfied by the execution of the wrong person? When a man commits a crime, the law demands his punishment, not that of a substitute; and there can be no law, human or divine, that can be satisfied by the punishment of a substitute. Can there be a law that demands that the guilty be rewarded? And yet, to reward the guilty is far nearer justice than to punish the innocent.

According to the orthodox theology, there would have been no heaven had no atonement been made. All the children of men would have been cast into hell forever. The old men bowed with grief, the smiling mothers, the sweet babes, the loving maidens, the brave, the tender, and the just, would have been given over to eternal pain. Man, it is claimed, can make no atonement for himself. If he commits one sin, and with that exception lives a life of perfect virtue, still that one sin would remain unexpiated, unatoned, and for that one sin he would be forever lost. To be saved by the goodness of another, to be a redeemed debtor forever, has in it something repugnant to manhood.

We must also remember that Jehovah took special charge of the Jewish people; and we have always been taught that he did so for the purpose of civilizing them. If he had succeeded in civilizing the Jews, he would have made the damnation of the

entire human race a certainty; because, if the Jews had been a civilized people when Christ appeared,—a people whose hearts had not been hardened by the laws and teachings of Jehovah,—they would not have crucified him, and, as a consequence, the world would have been lost. If the Jews had believed in religious freedom,—in the right of thought and speech,—not a human soul could ever have been saved. If, when Christ was on his way to Calvary, some brave, heroic soul had rescued him from the holy mob, he would not only have been eternally damned for his pains, but would have rendered impossible the salvation of any human being; and, except for the crucifixion of her son, the Virgin Mary, if the church is right, would be to-day among the lost.

In countless ways the Christian world has endeavored, for nearly two thousand years, to explain the atonement, and every effort has ended in an admission that it cannot be understood, and a declaration that it must be believed. Is it not immoral to teach that man can sin, that he can harden his heart and pollute his soul, and that, by repenting and believing something that he does not comprehend, he can avoid the consequences of his crimes? Has the promise and hope of forgiveness ever prevented the commission of a sin? Should men be taught that sin gives happiness here; that they ought to bear the evils of a virtuous life in this world for the sake of joy in the next; that they can repent between the last sin and the last breath; that after repentance every stain of the soul is washed away by the innocent blood of another; that the serpent of regret will not hiss in the ear of memory; that the saved will not even pity the victims of their own crimes; that the goodness of another can be transferred to them; and that sins forgiven cease to affect the unhappy wretches sinned against?

Another objection is that a certain belief is necessary to save the soul. It is often asserted that to believe is the only safe way. If you wish to be safe, be honest. Nothing can be safer than that. No matter what his belief may be, no man, even in the hour of death, can regret having been honest. It never can be necessary to throw away your reason to save your soul. A soul without reason is scarcely worth saving. There is no more degrading doctrine than that of mental non-resistance. The soul has a right to defend its castle—the brain, and he who waives that right becomes a serf and slave. Neither can I



admit that a man, by doing me an injury, can place me under obligation to do him a service. To render benefits for injuries is to ignore all distinctions between actions. He who treats his friends and enemies alike has neither love nor justice. The idea of non-resistance never occurred to a man with power to protect himself. This doctrine was the child of weakness, born when resistance was impossible. To allow a crime to be committed when you can prevent it, is next to committing the crime yourself. And yet, under the banner of non-resistance, the Church has shed the blood of millions, and in the folds of her sacred vestments have gleamed the daggers of assassination. With her cunning hands she wove the purple for hypocrisy, and placed the crown upon the brow of crime. For a thousand years larceny held the scales of justice, while beggars scorned the princely sons of toil, and ignorant fear denounced the liberty of thought.

If Christ was in fact God, he knew all the future. Before him, like a panorama, moved the history yet to be. He knew exactly how his words would be interpreted. He knew what crimes, what horrors, what infamies, would be committed in his name. He knew that the fires of persecution would climb around the limbs of countless martyrs. He knew that brave men would languish in dungeons, in darkness, filled with pain; that the Church would use instruments of torture, that his followers would appeal to whip and chain. He must have seen the horizon of the future red with the flames of the *auto da fé*. He knew all the creeds that would spring like poison fungi from every text. He saw the sects waging war against each other. He saw thousands of men, under the orders of priests, building dungeons for their fellow-men. He saw them using instruments of pain. He heard the groans, saw the faces white with agony, the tears, the blood—heard the shrieks and sobs of all the moaning, martyred multitudes. He knew that commentaries would be written on his words with swords, to be read by the light of fagots. He knew that the Inquisition would be born of teachings attributed to him. He saw all the interpolations and falsehoods that hypocrisy would write and tell. He knew that above these fields of death, these dungeons, these burnings, for a thousand years would float the dripping banner of the cross. He knew that in his name his followers would trade in human flesh, that cradles would be robbed, and women's breasts unbabed for gold, and yet he died with voiceless lips. Why did he fail to speak?

Why did he not tell his disciples, and through them the world, that man should not persecute, for opinion's sake, his fellow-man? Why did he not cry, You shall not persecute in my name; you shall not burn and torment those who differ from you in creed? Why did he not plainly say, I am the Son of God? Why did he not explain the doctrine of the trinity? Why did he not tell the manner of baptism that was pleasing to him? Why did he not say something positive, definite, and satisfactory about another world? Why did he not turn the tear-stained hope of heaven to the glad knowledge of another life? Why did he go dumbly to his death, leaving the world to misery and to doubt?

He came, they tell us, to make a revelation, and what did he reveal? "Love thy neighbor as thyself"? That was in the Old Testament. "Love God with all thy heart"? That was in the Old Testament. "Return good for evil"? That was said by Buddha seven hundred years before he was born. "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you"? This was the doctrine of Laotse. Did he come to give a rule of action? Zoroaster had done this long before: "Whenever thou art in doubt as to whether an action is good or bad, abstain from it." Did he come to teach us of another world? The immortality of the soul had been taught by Hindus, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans hundreds of years before he was born. Long before, the world had been told by Socrates that: "One who is injured ought not to return the injury, for on no account can it be right to do an injustice; and it is not right to return an injury, or to do evil to any man, however much we may have suffered from him." And Cicero had said: "Let us not listen to those who think that we ought to be angry with our enemies, and who believe this to be great and manly: nothing is more praiseworthy, nothing so clearly shows a great and noble soul, as clemency and readiness to forgive."

Is there anything nearer perfect than this from Confucius: "For benefits return benefits; for injuries return justice without any admixture of revenge"?

The dogma of eternal punishment rests upon passages in the New Testament. This infamous belief subverts every idea of justice. Around the angel of immortality the Church has coiled this serpent. A finite being can neither commit an infinite sin, nor a sin against the infinite. A being of infinite goodness and wisdom has no right, according to the human standard of justice,

to create any being destined to suffer eternal pain. A being of infinite wisdom would not create a failure, and surely a man destined to everlasting agony is not a success.

How long, according to the universal benevolence of the New Testament, can a man be reasonably punished in the next world for failing to believe something unreasonable in this? Can it be possible that any punishment can endure forever? Suppose that every flake of snow that ever fell was a figure nine, and that the first flake was multiplied by the second, and that product by the third, and so on to the last flake. And then suppose that this total should be multiplied by every drop of rain that ever fell, calling each drop a figure nine; and that total by each blade of grass that ever helped to weave a carpet for the earth, calling each blade a figure nine; and that again by every grain of sand on every shore, so that the grand total would make a line of nines so long that it would require millions upon millions of years for light, traveling at the rate of one hundred and eighty-five thousand miles per second, to reach the end. And suppose, further, that each unit in this almost infinite total stood for billions of ages—still that vast and almost endless time, measured by all the years beyond, is as one flake, one drop, one leaf, one blade, one grain, compared with all the flakes, and drops, and leaves, and blades, and grains.

Upon love's breast the Church has placed the eternal asp.

And yet, in the same book in which is taught this most infamous of doctrines, we are assured that "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

### III.

SO FAR as we know, man is the author of all books. If a book had been found on the earth by the first man, he might have regarded it as the work of God; but as men were here a good while before any books were found, and as man has produced a great many books, the probability is that the Bible is no exception.

Most nations, at the time the Old Testament was written, believed in slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution; and it is not wonderful that the book contained nothing contrary to such belief. The fact that it was in exact accord with the morality of its time proves that it was not the

product of any being superior to man. "The inspired writers" upheld or established slavery, countenanced polygamy, commanded wars of extermination, and ordered the slaughter of women and babes. In these respects they were precisely like the uninspired savages by whom they were surrounded. They also taught and commanded religious persecution as a duty, and visited the most trivial offenses with the punishment of death. In these particulars they were in exact accord with their barbarian neighbors. They were utterly ignorant of geology and astronomy, and knew no more of what had happened than of what would happen; and, so far as accuracy is concerned, their history and prophecy were about equal; in other words, they were just as ignorant as those who lived and died in nature's night.

Does any Christian believe that if God were to write a book now, he would uphold the crimes commanded in the Old Testament? Has Jehovah improved? Has infinite mercy become more merciful? Has infinite wisdom intellectually advanced? Will any one claim that the passages upholding slavery have liberated mankind; that we are indebted for our modern homes to the texts that made polygamy a virtue; or that religious liberty found its soil, its light, and rain in the infamous verse wherein the husband is commanded to stone to death the wife for worshipping an unknown God?

The usual answer to these objections is that no country has ever been civilized without the Bible.

The Jews were the only people to whom Jehovah made his will directly known,—the only people who had the Old Testament. Other nations were utterly neglected by their Creator. Yet, such was the effect of the Old Testament on the Jews, that they crucified a kind, loving, and perfectly innocent man. They could not have done much worse without a Bible. In the crucifixion of Christ, they followed the teachings of his Father. If, as it is now alleged by the theologians, no nation can be civilized without a Bible, certainly God must have known the fact six thousand years ago, as well as the theologians know it now. Why did he not furnish every nation with a Bible?

As to the Old Testament, I insist that all the bad passages were written by men; that those passages were not inspired. I insist that a being of infinite goodness never commanded man to enslave his fellow-man, never told a mother to sell her babe, never established polygamy, never ordered one nation to extermi-



nate another, and never told a husband to kill his wife because she suggested the worshiping of some other God.

I also insist that the Old Testament would be a much better book with all of these passages left out; and, whatever may be said of the rest, the passages to which attention has been drawn can with vastly more propriety be attributed to a devil than to a god.

Take from the New Testament all passages upholding the idea that belief is necessary to salvation; that Christ was offered as an atonement for the sins of the world; that the punishment of the human soul will go on forever; that heaven is the reward of faith, and hell the penalty of honest investigation; take from it all miraculous stories,—and I admit that all the good passages are true. If they are true, it makes no difference whether they are inspired or not. Inspiration is only necessary to give authority to that which is repugnant to human reason. Only that which never happened needs to be substantiated by miracles. The universe is natural.

The Church must cease to insist that the passages upholding the institutions of savage men were inspired of God. The dogma of the atonement must be abandoned. Good deeds must take the place of faith. The savagery of eternal punishment must be renounced. Credulity is not a virtue, and investigation is not a crime. Miracles are the children of mendacity. Nothing can be more wonderful than the majestic, unbroken, sublime, and eternal procession of causes and effects.

Reason must be the final arbiter. "Inspired" books attested by miracles cannot stand against a demonstrated fact. A religion that does not command the respect of the greatest minds will, in a little while, excite the mockery of all. Every civilized man believes in the liberty of thought. Is it possible that God is intolerant? Is an act infamous in man one of the virtues of the Deity? Could there be progress in heaven without intellectual liberty? Is the freedom of the future to exist only in perdition? Is it not, after all, barely possible that a man acting like Christ can be saved? Is a man to be eternally rewarded for believing according to evidence, without evidence, or against evidence? Are we to be saved because we are good, or because another was virtuous? Is credulity to be winged and crowned, while honest doubt is chained and damned?

Do not misunderstand me. My position is that the cruel passages in the Old Testament are not inspired; that slavery,

polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution always have been, are, and forever will be, abhorred and cursed by the honest, the virtuous, and the loving; that the innocent cannot justly suffer for the guilty, and that vicarious vice and vicarious virtue are equally absurd; that eternal punishment is eternal revenge; that only the natural can happen; that miracles prove the dishonesty of the few and the credulity of the many; and that, according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, salvation does not depend upon belief, nor the atonement, nor a "second birth," but that these gospels are in exact harmony with the declaration of the great Persian: "Taking the first footstep with the good thought, the second with the good word, and the third with the good deed, I entered paradise."

The dogmas of the past no longer reach the level of the highest thought, nor satisfy the hunger of the heart. While dusty faiths, embalmed and sepulchered in ancient texts, remain the same, the sympathies of men enlarge; the brain no longer kills its young; the happy lips give liberty to honest thoughts; the mental firmament expands and lifts; the broken clouds drift by; the hideous dreams, the foul, misshapen children of the monstrous night, dissolve and fade.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

# THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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## II.

BY JEREMIAH S. BLACK.

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“Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice: his reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have them, they are not worth the search.”—*Merchant of Venice*.

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THE request to answer the foregoing paper comes to me, not in the form but with the effect of a challenge, which I cannot decline without seeming to acknowledge that the religion of the civilized world is an absurd superstition, propagated by impostors, professed by hypocrites, and believed only by credulous dupes.

But why should I, an unlearned and unauthorized layman, be placed in such a predicament? The explanation is easy enough. This is no business of the priests. Their prescribed duty is to preach the word, in the full assurance that it will commend itself to all good and honest hearts by its own manifest veracity and

the singular purity of its precepts. They cannot afford to turn away from their proper work, and leave willing hearers uninstructed, while they wrangle in vain with a predetermined opponent. They were warned to expect slander, indignity, and insult, and these are among the evils which they must not resist.

It will be seen that I am assuming no clerical function. I am not out on the forlorn hope of converting Mr. Ingersoll. I am no preacher exhorting a sinner to leave the seat of the scornful and come up to the bench of the penitents. My duty is more analogous to that of the policeman who would silence a rude disturber of the congregation, by telling him that his clamor is false and his conduct an offense against public decency.

Nor is the Church in any danger which calls for the special vigilance of its servants. Mr. Ingersoll thinks that the rock-founded faith of Christendom is giving way before his assaults, but he is grossly mistaken. The first sentence of his essay is a preposterous blunder. It is not true that "*a profound change* has taken place in the world of *thought*," unless a more rapid spread of the Gospel and a more faithful observance of its moral principles can be called so. Its truths are everywhere proclaimed with the power of sincere conviction, and accepted with devout reverence by uncounted multitudes of all classes. Solemn temples rise to its honor in the great cities; from every hill-top in the country you see the church-spire pointing toward heaven, and on Sunday all the paths that lead to it are crowded with worshipers. In nearly all families, parents teach their children that Christ is God, and his system of morality absolutely perfect. This belief lies so deep in the popular heart that, if every written record of it were destroyed to-day, the memory of millions could reproduce it to-morrow. Its earnestness is proved by its works. Wherever it goes it manifests itself in deeds of practical benevolence. It builds, not churches alone, but almshouses, hospitals, and asylums. It shelters the poor, feeds the hungry, visits the sick, consoles the afflicted, provides for the fatherless, comforts the heart of the widow, instructs the ignorant, reforms the vicious, and saves to the uttermost them that are ready to perish. To the common observer, it does not look as if Christianity was making itself ready to be swallowed up by Infidelity. Thus far, at least, the promise has been kept that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."



There is, to be sure, a change in the party hostile to religion—not “a *profound* change,” but a change entirely superficial—which consists, not in *thought*, but merely in modes of expression and methods of attack. The bad classes of society always hated the doctrine and discipline which reproached their wickedness and frightened them by threats of punishment in another world. Aforetime they showed their contempt of divine authority only by their actions; but now, under new leadership, their enmity against God breaks out into articulate blasphemy. They assemble themselves together, they hear with passionate admiration the bold harangue which ridicules and defies the Maker of the universe; fiercely they rage against the Highest, and loudly they laugh, alike at the justice that condemns, and the mercy that offers to pardon them. The orator who relieves them by assurances of impunity, and tells them that no supreme authority has made any law to control them, is applauded to the echo and paid a high price for his congenial labor; he pockets their money, and flatters himself that he is a great power, profoundly moving “the world of thought.”

There is another totally false notion expressed in the opening paragraph, namely, that “they who know most of nature believe the least about theology.” The truth is exactly the other way. The more clearly one sees “the grand procession of causes and effects,” the more awful his reverence becomes for the author of the “sublime and unbroken” law which links them together. Not self-conceit and rebellious pride, but unspeakable humility, and a deep sense of the measureless distance between the Creator and the creature, fills the mind of him who looks with a rational spirit upon the works of the All-wise One. The heart of Newton repeats the solemn confession of David: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?” At the same time, the lamentable fact must be admitted that “a little learning is a dangerous thing” to some persons. The sciolist with a mere smattering of physical knowledge is apt to mistake himself for a philosopher, and, swelling with his own importance, he gives out, like Simon Magus, “that himself is some great one.” His vanity becomes inflamed more and more, until he begins to think he knows all things. He takes every occasion to show his accomplishments by finding fault with the

works of creation and Providence; and this is an exercise in which he cannot long continue without learning to disbelieve in any Being greater than himself. It was to such a person, and not to the unpretending simpleton, that Solomon applied his often quoted aphorism: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." These are what Paul refers to as "vain babblings and the opposition of science, falsely so called"; but they are perfectly powerless to stop or turn aside the great current of human thought on the subject of Christian theology. That majestic stream, supplied from a thousand unfailing fountains, rolls on and will roll forever.

*Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

Mr. Ingersoll is not, as some have estimated him, the most formidable enemy that Christianity has encountered since the time of Julian the Apostate. But he stands at the head of living infidels, "by merit raised to that bad eminence." His mental organization has the peculiar defects which fit him for such a place. He is all imagination and no discretion. He rises sometimes into a region of wild poetry, where he can color everything to suit himself. His motto well expresses the character of his argumentation—"mountains are as unstable as clouds": a fancy is as good as a fact, and a high-sounding period is rather better than a logical demonstration. His inordinate self-confidence makes him at once ferocious and fearless. He was a practical politician before he "took the stump" against Christianity, and at all times he has proved his capacity to "split the ears of the groundlings," and make the unskillful laugh. The article before us is the least objectionable of all his productions. Its style is higher, and better suited to the weight of the theme. Here the violence of his fierce invective is moderated; his scurrility gives place to an attempt at sophistry less shocking if not more true; and his coarse jokes are either excluded altogether, or else veiled in the decent obscurity of general terms. Such a paper from such a man, at a time like the present, is not wholly unworthy of a grave contradiction.

He makes certain charges which we answer by an explicit denial, and thus an issue is made, upon which, as a pleader would say, we "put ourselves upon the country." He avers that a certain "something called Christianity" is a false faith imposed on the world without evidence; that the facts it pretends to rest on are mere inventions; that its doctrines are pernicious; that

its requirements are unreasonable; and that its sanctions are cruel. I deny all this, and assert, on the contrary, that its doctrines are divinely revealed; its fundamental facts incontestably proved; its morality perfectly free from all taint of error, and its influence most beneficent upon society in general, and upon all individuals who accept it and make it their rule of action.

How shall this be determined? Not by what we call divine revelation, for that would be begging the question; not by sentiment, taste, or temper, for these are as likely to be false as true; but by inductive reasoning from evidence, of which the value is to be measured according to those rules of logic which enlightened and just men everywhere have adopted to guide them in the search for truth. We can appeal only to that rational love of justice, and that detestation of falsehood, which fair-minded persons of good intelligence bring to the consideration of other important subjects when it becomes their duty to decide upon them. In short, I want a decision upon sound judicial principles.

Gibson, the great Chief-Justice of Pennsylvania, once said to certain skeptical friends of his: "Give Christianity a common-law trial; submit the evidence *pro* and *con* to an impartial jury under the direction of a competent court, and the verdict will assuredly be in its favor." This deliverance, coming from the most illustrious judge of his time, not at all given to expressions of sentimental piety, and quite incapable of speaking on any subject for mere effect, staggered the unbelief of those who heard it. I did not know him then, except by his great reputation for ability and integrity, but my thoughts were strongly influenced by his authority, and I learned to set a still higher value upon all his opinions when, in after life, I was honored with his close and intimate friendship.

Let Christianity have a trial on Mr. Ingersoll's indictment, and give us a decision *secundum allegata et probata*. I will confine myself strictly to the record; that is to say, I will meet the accusations contained in this paper, and not those made elsewhere by him or others.

His first specification against Christianity is the belief of its disciples "that there is a personal God, the creator of the material universe." If God made the world it was a most stupendous miracle, and all miracles, according to Mr. Ingersoll's idea, are "the children of mendacity." To admit the one great miracle of creation would be an admission that other miracles are at least

probable, and that would ruin his whole case. But you cannot catch the leviathan of atheism with a hook. The universe, he says, is natural—it came into being of its own accord; it made its own laws at the start, and afterward improved itself considerably by spontaneous evolution. It would be a mere waste of time and space to enumerate the proofs which show that the universe was created by a preëxistent and self-conscious Being, of power and wisdom to us inconceivable. Conviction of the fact (miraculous though it be) forces itself on every one whose mental faculties are healthy and tolerably well balanced. The notion that all things owe their origin and their harmonious arrangement to the fortuitous concurrence of atoms is a kind of lunacy which very few men in these days are afflicted with. I hope I may safely assume it as certain that all, or nearly all, who read this page will have sense and reason enough to see for themselves that the plan of the universe could not have been designed without a Designer, or executed without a Maker.

But Mr. Ingersoll asserts that, at all events, this material world had not a good and beneficent creator; it is a bad, savage, cruel piece of work, with its pestilences, storms, earthquakes, and volcanoes; and man, with his liability to sickness, suffering, and death, is not a success, but, on the contrary, a failure. To defend the Creator of the world against an arraignment so foul as this would be almost as unbecoming as to make the accusation. We have neither jurisdiction nor capacity to rejudge the justice of God. Why man is made to fill this particular place in the scale of creation—a little lower than the angels, yet far above the brutes; not passionless and pure, like the former, nor mere machines, like the latter; able to stand, yet free to fall; knowing the right, and accountable for going wrong; gifted with reason, and impelled by self-love to exercise the faculty—these are questions on which we may have our speculative opinions, but knowledge is out of our reach. Meantime, we do not discredit our mental independence by taking it for granted that the Supreme Being has done all things well. Our ignorance of the whole scheme makes us poor critics upon the small part that comes within our limited perceptions. Seeming defects in the structure of the world may be its most perfect ornament—all apparent harshness the tenderest of mercies.

“ All discord, harmony not understood,  
All partial evil, universal good.”

But worse errors are imputed to God as moral ruler of the world than those charged against him as creator. He made man badly, but governed him worse; if the Jehovah of the Old Testament was not merely an imaginary being, then, according to Mr. Ingersoll, he was a prejudiced, barbarous, criminal tyrant. We will see what ground he lays, if any, for these outrageous assertions.

Mainly, principally, first and most important of all, is the unqualified assertion that the "moral code" which Jehovah gave to his people "is in many respects abhorrent to every good and tender man." Does Mr. Ingersoll know what he is talking about? The moral code of the Bible consists of certain immutable rules to govern the conduct of all men, at all times and all places, in their private and personal relations with one another. It is entirely separate and apart from the civil polity, the religious forms, the sanitary provisions, the police regulations, and the system of international law laid down for the special and exclusive observance of the Jewish people. This is a distinction which every intelligent man knows how to make. Has Mr. Ingersoll fallen into the egregious blunder of confounding these things? or, understanding the true sense of his words, is he rash and shameless enough to assert that the moral code of the Bible excites the abhorrence of good men? In fact and in truth, this moral code, which he reviles, instead of being abhorred, is entitled to, and has received, the profoundest respect of all honest and sensible persons. The second table of the Decalogue is a perfect compendium of those duties which every man owes to himself, his family, and his neighbor. In a few simple words, which he can commit to memory almost in a minute, it teaches him to purify his heart from covetousness; to live decently, to injure nobody in reputation, person, or property, and to give every one his own. By the poets, the prophets, and the sages of Israel, these great elements are expanded into a volume of minuter rules, so clear, so impressive, and yet so solemn and so lofty, that no preëxisting system of philosophy can compare with it for a moment. If this vain mortal is not blind with passion, he will see, upon reflection, that he has attacked the Old Testament precisely where it is most impregnable.

Dismissing his groundless charge against the moral code, we come to his strictures on the civil government of the Jews, which he says was so bad and unjust that the Lawgiver by



whom it was established must have been as savagely cruel as the Creator that made storms and pestilences; and the work of both was more worthy of a devil than a god. His language is recklessly bad, very defective in method, and altogether lacking in precision. But, apart from the ribaldry of it, which I do not feel myself bound to notice, I find four objections to the Jewish constitution—not more than four—which are definite enough to admit of an answer. These relate to the provisions of the Mosaic law on the subjects of (1) Blasphemy and Idolatry; (2) War; (3) Slavery; (4) Polygamy. In these respects he pronounces the Jewish system not only unwise but criminally unjust.

Here let me call attention to the difficulty of reasoning about justice with a man who has no acknowledged standard of right and wrong. What is justice? That which accords with law; and the supreme law is the will of God. But I am dealing with an adversary who does not admit that there is a God. Then for him there is no standard at all; one thing is as right as another, and all things are equally wrong. Without a sovereign ruler there is no law, and where there is no law there can be no transgression. It is the misfortune of the atheistic theory that it makes the moral world an anarchy; it refers all ethical questions to that confused tribunal where chaos sits as umpire and “by decision more embroils the fray.” But through the whole of this cloudy paper there runs a vein of presumptuous egoism which says as plainly as words can speak it that the author holds *himself* to be the ultimate judge of all good and evil; what he approves is right, and what he dislikes is certainly wrong. Of course I concede nothing to a claim like that. I will not admit that the Jewish constitution is a thing to be condemned merely because he curses it. I appeal from his profane malediction to the conscience of men who have a rule to judge by. Such persons will readily see that his specific objections to the statesmanship which established the civil government of the Hebrew people are extremely shallow, and do not furnish the shade of an excuse for the indecency of his general abuse.

*First.* He regards the punishments inflicted for blasphemy and idolatry as being immoderately cruel. Considering them merely as religious offenses,—as sins against God alone,—I agree that civil laws should notice them not at all. But sometimes they affect very injuriously certain social rights which it is the duty of the state to protect. Wantonly to shock the religious feelings

of your neighbor is a grievous wrong. To utter blasphemy or obscenity in the presence of a Christian woman is hardly better than to strike her in the face. Still, neither policy nor justice requires them to be ranked among the highest crimes in a government constituted like ours. But things were wholly different under the Jewish theocracy, where God was the personal head of the state. There blasphemy was a breach of political allegiance; idolatry was an overt act of treason; to worship the gods of the hostile heathen was deserting to the public enemy, and giving him aid and comfort. These are crimes which every independent community has always punished with the utmost rigor. In our own very recent history, they were repressed at the cost of more lives than Judea ever contained at any one time.

Mr. Ingersoll not only ignores these considerations, but he goes the length of calling God a religious persecutor and a tyrant because he does not encourage and reward the service and devotion paid by his enemies to the false gods of the pagan world. He professes to believe that all kinds of worship are equally meritorious, and should meet the same acceptance from the true God. It is almost incredible that such drivel as this should be uttered by anybody. But Mr. Ingersoll not only expresses the thought plainly—he urges it with the most extravagant figures of his florid rhetoric. He quotes the first commandment, in which Jehovah claims for himself the exclusive worship of His people, and cites, in contrast, the promise put in the mouth of Brahma, that he will appropriate the worship of all gods to himself, and reward all worshipers alike. These passages being compared, he declares the first “a dungeon, where crawl the things begot of jealous slime”; the other, “great as the domed firmament, inlaid with suns.” Why is the living God, whom Christians believe to be the Lord of liberty and Father of lights, denounced as the keeper of a loathsome dungeon? Because he refuses to encourage and reward the worship of Mammon and Moloch, of Belial and Baal; of Bacchus, with its drunken orgies, and Venus, with its wanton obscenities; the bestial religion which degraded the soul of Egypt and the “dark idolatries of alienated Judah,” polluted with the moral filth of all the nations round about. Let the reader decide whether this man, entertaining such sentiments and opinions, is fit to be a teacher, or at all likely to lead us in the way we should go.

*Second.* Under the constitution which God provided for the Jews, they had, like every other nation, the war-making power. They could not have lived a day without it. The right to exist implied the right to repel, with all their strength, the opposing force which threatened their destruction. It is true, also, that in the exercise of this power they did not observe those rules of courtesy and humanity which have been adopted in modern times by civilized belligerents. Why? Because their enemies, being mere savages, did not understand, and would not practice, any rule whatever; and the Jews were bound *ex necessitate rei*—not merely justified by the *lex talionis*—to do as their enemies did. In your treatment of hostile barbarians, you not only may lawfully, but must necessarily, adopt their mode of warfare. If they come to conquer you, they may be conquered by you; if they give no quarter, they are entitled to none; if the death of your whole population be their purpose, you may defeat it by exterminating theirs. This sufficiently answers the silly talk of atheists and semi-atheists about the warlike wickedness of the Jews.

But Mr. Ingersoll positively, and with the emphasis of supreme and all-sufficient authority, declares that “a war of conquest is simply murder.” He sustains this proposition by no argument founded in principle. He puts sentiment in place of law, and denounces aggressive fighting because it is offensive to his “tender and refined soul”: the atrocity of it is therefore proportioned to the sensibilities of his own heart. He proves war a desperately wicked thing by continually vaunting his own love for small children. Babes—sweet babes—the prattle of babes—are the subjects of his most pathetic eloquence, and his idea of music is embodied in the commonplace expression of a Hindu, that the lute is sweet only to those who have not heard the prattle of their own children. All this is very amiable in him, and the more so, perhaps, as these objects of his affection are the young ones of a race in his opinion miscreated by an evil-working chance. But his *philoprogenitiveness* proves nothing against Jew or Gentile, seeing that all have it in an equal degree, and those feel it most who make the least parade of it. Certainly it gives him no authority to malign the God who implanted it alike in the hearts of us all. But I admit that his benevolence becomes peculiar and ultra when it extends to beasts as well as babes. He is struck with horror by the sacrificial solemnities of the Jewish religion.

"The killing of those animals was," he says, "a terrible system," a "shedding of innocent blood," "shocking to a refined and sensitive soul." There is such a depth of tenderness in this feeling, and such a splendor of refinement, that I give up without a struggle to the superiority of the man who merely professes it. A carnivorous American, full of beef and mutton, who mourns with indignant sorrow because bulls and goats were killed in Judea three thousand years ago, has reached the climax of sentimental goodness, and should be permitted to dictate on all questions of peace and war. Let Grotius, Vattel, and Puffendorf, as well as Moses and the prophets, hide their diminished heads.

But to show how inefficacious, for all practical purposes, a mere sentiment is when substituted for a principle, it is only necessary to recollect that Mr. Ingersoll is himself a warrior who staid not behind the mighty men of his tribe when they gathered themselves together for a war of conquest. He took the lead of a regiment as eager as himself to spoil the Philistines, "and out he went a-coloneling." How many Amalekites, and Hittites, and Amorites he put to the edge of the sword, how many wives he widowed, or how many mothers he "unbabled" cannot now be told. I do not even know how many droves of innocent oxen he condemned to the slaughter. But it is certain that his refined and tender soul took great pleasure in the terror, conflagration, blood, and tears with which the war was attended, and in all the hard oppressions which the conquered people were made to suffer afterward. I do not say that the war was either better or worse for his participation and approval. But if his own conduct (for which he professes neither penitence nor shame) was right, it was right on grounds which make it an inexcusable outrage to call the children of Israel savage criminals for carrying on wars of aggression to save the life of their government. These inconsistencies are the necessary consequence of having no rule of action and no guide for the conscience. When a man throws away the golden metewand of the law which God has provided, and takes the elastic cord of feeling for his measure of righteousness, you cannot tell from day to day what he will think or do.

*Third.* But Jehovah permitted his chosen people to hold the captives they took in war or purchased from the heathen as servants for life. This was slavery, and Mr. Ingersoll declares that

"in all civilized countries it is not only admitted, but it is passionately asserted, that slavery is, and always was, a hideous crime"; therefore he concludes that Jehovah was a criminal. This would be a *non sequitur*, even if the premises were true. But the premises are false: civilized countries have admitted no such thing. That slavery is a crime, under all circumstances and at all times, is a doctrine first started by the adherents of a political faction in this country, less than forty years ago. They denounced God and Christ for not agreeing with them, in terms very similar to those used here by Mr. Ingersoll. But they did not constitute the civilized world; nor were they, if the truth must be told, a very respectable portion of it. Politically, they were successful; I need not say by what means, or with what effect upon the morals of the country. Doubtless Mr. Ingersoll gets a great advantage by invoking their passions and their interests to his aid, and he knows how to use it. I can only say that, whether American Abolitionism was right or wrong under the circumstances in which we were placed, my faith and my reason both assure me that the infallible God proceeded upon good grounds when he authorized slavery in Judea. Subordination of inferiors to superiors is the groundwork of human society. All improvement of our race, in this world and the next, must come from obedience to some master better and wiser than ourselves. There can be no question that, when a Jew took a neighboring savage for his bond-servant, incorporated him into his family, tamed him, taught him to work, and gave him a knowledge of the true God, he conferred upon him a most beneficent boon.

*Fourth.* Polygamy is another of his objections to the Mosaic constitution. Strange to say, it is not there. It is neither commanded nor prohibited; it is only discouraged. If Mr. Ingersoll were a statesman instead of a mere politician, he would see good and sufficient reasons for the forbearance to legislate directly upon the subject. It would be improper for me to set them forth here. He knows, probably, that the influence of the Christian Church alone, and without the aid of state enactments, has extirpated this bad feature of Asiatic manners wherever its doctrines were carried. As the Christian faith prevails in any community, in that proportion precisely marriage is consecrated to its true purpose, and all intercourse between the sexes refined and purified. Mr. Ingersoll got his own devotion to the principle of monogamy—his own respect for the highest type of female



character—his own belief in the virtue of fidelity to one good wife—from the example and precept of his Christian parents. I speak confidently, because these are sentiments which do not grow in the heart of the natural man without being planted. Why, then, does he throw polygamy into the face of the religion which abhors it? Because he is nothing if not political. The Mormons believe in polygamy, and the Mormons are unpopular. They are guilty of having not only many wives but much property, and if a war could be hissed up against them, its fruits might be more “gaynefull pilladge than wee doe now conceeve of.” It is a cunning maneuver, this, of strengthening atheism by enlisting anti-Mormon rapacity against the God of the Christians. I can only protest against the use he would make of these and other political interests. It is not argument; it is mere stump oratory.

I think I have repelled all of Mr. Ingersoll’s accusations against the Old Testament that are worth noticing, and I might stop here. But I will not close upon him without letting him see, at least, some part of the case on the other side.

I do not enumerate in detail the positive proofs which support the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible, though they are at hand in great abundance, because the evidence in support of the new dispensation will establish the verity of the old—the two being so connected together that if one is true the other cannot be false.

When Jesus of Nazareth announced himself to be Christ, the Son of God, in Judea, many thousand persons who heard his words and saw his works believed in his divinity without hesitation. Since the morning of the creation, nothing has occurred so wonderful as the rapidity with which this religion spread itself abroad. Men who were in the noon of life when Jesus was put to death as a malefactor lived to see him worshiped as God by organized bodies of believers in every province of the Roman empire. In a few more years it took complete possession of the general mind, supplanted all other religions, and wrought a radical change in human society. It did this in the face of obstacles which, according to every human calculation, were insurmountable. It was antagonized by all the evil propensities, the sensual wickedness, and the vulgar crimes of the multitude, as well as the polished vices of the luxurious classes; and was most violently opposed even by those sentiments and habits of thought which were esteemed virtuous, such as patriotism and military

heroism. It encountered not only the ignorance and superstition, but the learning and philosophy, the poetry, eloquence, and art of the time. Barbarism and civilization were alike its deadly enemies. The priesthood of every established religion and the authority of every government were arrayed against it. All these, combined together and roused to ferocious hostility, were overcome, not by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but by the simple presentation of a pure and peaceful doctrine, preached by obscure strangers at the daily peril of their lives. Is it Mr. Ingersoll's idea that this happened by chance, like the creation of the world? If not, there are but two other ways to account for it: either the evidence by which the Apostles were able to prove the supernatural origin of the gospel was overwhelming and irresistible, or else its propagation was provided for and carried on by the direct aid of the Divine Being himself. Between these two, infidelity may make its own choice.

Just here another dilemma presents its horns to our adversary. If Christianity was a human fabrication, its authors must have been either good men or bad. It is a moral impossibility—a mere contradiction in terms—to say that good, honest, and true men practiced a gross and willful deception upon the world. It is equally incredible that any combination of knaves, however base, would fraudulently concoct a religious system to denounce themselves, and to invoke the curse of God upon their own conduct. Men that love lies, love not such lies as that. Is there any way out of this difficulty, except by confessing that Christianity is what it purports to be—a divine revelation?

The acceptance of Christianity by a large portion of the generation contemporary with its Founder and his apostles was, under the circumstances, an adjudication as solemn and authoritative as mortal intelligence could pronounce. The record of that judgment has come down to us, accompanied by the depositions of the principal witnesses. In the course of eighteen centuries many efforts have been made to open the judgment or set it aside on the ground that the evidence was insufficient to support it. But on every rehearing the wisdom and virtue of mankind have re-affirmed it. And now comes Mr. Ingersoll, to try the experiment of another bold, bitter, and fierce re-argument. I will present some of the considerations which would compel me, if I were a judge or juror in the cause, to decide it just as it was decided originally.

*First.* There is no good reason to doubt that the statements of the evangelists, as we have them now, are genuine. The multiplication of copies was a sufficient guarantee against any material alteration of the text. Mr. Ingersoll speaks of interpolations made by the fathers of the Church. All he knows and all he has ever heard on that subject is that some of the innumerable transcripts contained errors which were discovered and corrected. That simply proves the present integrity of the documents.

*Second.* I call these statements *depositions*, because they are entitled to that kind of credence which we give to declarations made under oath—but in a much higher degree, for they are more than sworn to. They were made in the immediate prospect of death. Perhaps this would not affect the conscience of an atheist,—neither would an oath,—but these people manifestly believed in a judgment after death, before a God of truth, whose displeasure they feared above all things.

*Third.* The witnesses could not have been mistaken. The nature of the facts precluded the possibility of any delusion about them. For every averment they had “the sensible and true avouch of their own eyes” and ears. Besides, they were plain-thinking, sober, unimaginative men, who, unlike Mr. Ingersoll, always, under all circumstances, and especially in the presence of eternity, recognized the difference between mountains and clouds. It is inconceivable how any fact could be proven by evidence more conclusive than the statement of such persons, publicly given and steadfastly persisted in through every kind of persecution, imprisonment, and torture to the last agonies of a lingering death.

*Fourth.* Apart from these terrible tests, the more ordinary claims to credibility are not wanting. They were men of unimpeachable character. The most virulent enemies of the cause they spoke and died for have never suggested a reason for doubting their personal honesty. But there is affirmative proof that they and their fellow-disciples were held by those who knew them in the highest estimation for truthfulness. Wherever they made their report it was not only believed, but believed with a faith so implicit that thousands were ready at once to seal it with their blood.

*Fifth.* The tone and temper of their narrative impress us with a sentiment of profound respect. It is an artless, unimpas-

sioned, simple story. No argument, no rhetoric, no epithets, no praises of friends, no denunciation of enemies, no attempts at concealment. How strongly these qualities commend the testimony of a witness to the confidence of judge and jury is well known to all who have any experience in such matters.

*Sixth.* The statements made by the evangelists are alike upon every important point, but are different in form and expression, some of them including details which the others omit. These variations make it perfectly certain that there could have been no previous concert between the witnesses, and that each spoke independently of the others, according to his own conscience and from his own knowledge. In considering the testimony of several witnesses to the same transaction, their substantial agreement upon the main facts, with circumstantial differences in the detail, is always regarded as the great characteristic of truth and honesty. There is no rule of evidence more universally adopted than this—none better sustained by general experience, or more immovably fixed in the good sense of mankind. Mr. Ingersoll, himself, admits the rule and concedes its soundness. The logical consequence of that admission is that we are bound to take this evidence as incontestably true. But mark the infatuated perversity with which he seeks to evade it. He says that when we claim that the witnesses were inspired, the rule does not apply, because the witnesses then speak what is known to him who inspired them, and all must speak exactly the same, even to the minutest detail. Mr. Ingersoll's notion of an inspired witness is that he is no witness at all, but an irresponsible medium who unconsciously and involuntarily raps out or writes down whatever he is prompted to say. But this is a false assumption, not countenanced or even suggested by anything contained in the Scriptures. The apostles and evangelists are expressly declared to be witnesses, in the proper sense of the word, called and sent to testify the truth according to their knowledge. If they had all told the same story in the same way, without variation, and accounted for its uniformity by declaring that they were inspired, and had spoken without knowing whether their words were true or false, where would have been their claim to credibility? But they testified what they knew; and here comes an infidel critic impugning their testimony because the impress of truth is stamped upon its face.

*Seventh.* It does not appear that the statements of the evangelists were ever denied by any person who pretended to know the facts. Many there were in that age and afterward who resisted the belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and only Saviour of man; but his wonderful works, the miraculous purity of his life, the unapproachable loftiness of his doctrines, his trial and condemnation by a judge who pronounced him innocent, his patient suffering, his death on the cross, and resurrection from the grave,—of these not the faintest contradiction was attempted, if we except the false and feeble story which the elders and chief priests bribed the guard at the tomb to put in circulation.

*Eighth.* What we call the fundamental truths of Christianity consist of great public events which are sufficiently established by history without special proof. The value of mere historical evidence increases according to the importance of the facts in question, their general notoriety, and the magnitude of their visible consequences. Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown, and changed the destiny of Europe and America. Nobody would think of calling a witness or even citing an official report to prove it. Julius Cæsar was assassinated. We do not need to prove that fact like an ordinary murder. He was master of the world, and his death was followed by a war with the conspirators, the battle at Philippi, the quarrel of the victorious triumvirs, Actium, and the permanent establishment of imperial government under Augustus. The life and character, the death and resurrection, of Jesus are just as visibly connected with events which even an infidel must admit to be of equal importance. The Church rose and armed herself in righteousness for conflict with the powers of darkness; innumerable multitudes of the best and wisest rallied to her standard and died in her cause; her enemies employed the coarse and vulgar machinery of human government against her, and her professors were brutally murdered in large numbers; her triumph was complete; the gods of Greece and Rome crumbled on their altars; the world was revolutionized and human society was transformed. The course of these events, and a thousand others, which reach down to the present hour, received its first propulsion from the transcendent fact of Christ's crucifixion. Moreover, we find the memorial monuments of the original truth planted all along the way. The sacraments of baptism and the supper constantly point us back to the



author and finisher of our faith. The mere historical evidence is for these reasons much stronger than what we have for other occurrences which are regarded as undeniable. When to this is added the cumulative evidence given directly and positively by eye-witnesses of irreproachable character, and wholly uncontradicted, the proof becomes so strong that the disbelief we hear of seems like a kind of insanity.

"It is the very error of the moon,  
Which comes more near the earth than she was wont,  
And makes men mad!"

From the facts established by this evidence, it follows irresistibly that the Gospel has come to us from God. That silences all reasoning about the wisdom and justice of its doctrines, since it is impossible even to imagine that wrong can be done or commanded by that Sovereign Being whose will alone is the ultimate standard of all justice.

But Mr. Ingersoll is still dissatisfied. He raises objections as false, fleeting, and baseless as clouds, and insists that they are as stable as the mountains, whose everlasting foundations are laid by the hand of the Almighty. I will compress his propositions into plain words printed in *italics*, and, taking a look at his misty creations, let them roll away and vanish into air, one after another.

*Christianity offers eternal salvation as the reward of belief alone.* This is a misrepresentation simple and naked. No such doctrine is propounded in the Scriptures, or in the creed of any Christian church. On the contrary, it is distinctly taught that faith avails nothing without repentance, reformation, and newness of life.

*The mere failure to believe it is punished in hell.* I have never known any Christian man or woman to assert this. It is universally agreed that children too young to understand it do not need to believe it. And this exemption extends to adults who have never seen the evidence, or, from weakness of intellect, are incapable of weighing it. Lunatics and idiots are not in the least danger, and, for aught I know, this category may, by a stretch of God's mercy, include minds constitutionally sound, but with faculties so perverted by education, habit, or passion that they are incapable of reasoning. I sincerely hope that, upon this or some other principle, Mr. Ingersoll may escape the hell he talks about

so much. But there is no direct promise to save him in spite of himself. The plan of redemption contains no express covenant to pardon one who rejects it with scorn and hatred. Our hope for him rests upon the infinite compassion of that gracious Being who prayed on the cross for the insulting enemies who nailed him there.

*The mystery of the second birth is incomprehensible.* Christ established a new kingdom *in* the world, but not *of* it. Subjects were admitted to the privileges and protection of its government by a process equivalent to naturalization. To be born again, or regenerated, is to be naturalized. The words all mean the same thing. Does Mr. Ingersoll want to disgrace his own intellect by pretending that he cannot see this simple analogy?

*The doctrine of the atonement is absurd, unjust, and immoral.* The plan of salvation, or any plan for the rescue of sinners from the legal operation of divine justice, could have been framed only in the councils of the Omniscient. Necessarily its heights and depths are not easily fathomed by finite intelligence. But the greatest, ablest, wisest, and most virtuous men that ever lived have given it their profoundest consideration, and found it to be not only authorized by revelation, but theoretically conformed to their best and highest conceptions of infinite goodness. Nevertheless, here is a rash and superficial man, without training or habits of reflection, who, upon a mere glance, declares that it "must be abandoned," because it *seems to him* "absurd, unjust, and immoral." I would not abridge his freedom of thought or speech, and the *argumentum ad verecundiam* would be lost upon him. Otherwise I might suggest that, when he finds all authority, human and divine, against him, he had better speak in a tone less arrogant.

*He does not comprehend how justice and mercy can be blended together in the plan of redemption, and therefore it cannot be true.* A thing is not necessarily false because he does not understand it: he cannot annihilate a principle or a fact by ignoring it. There are many truths in heaven and earth which no man can see through; for instance, the union of man's soul with his body is not only an unknowable but an unimaginable mystery. Is it therefore false that a connection does exist between matter and spirit?

*How, he asks, can the sufferings of an innocent person satisfy justice for the sins of the guilty?* This raises a metaphysical

question, which it is not necessary or possible for me to discuss here. As matter of fact, Christ died that sinners might be reconciled to God, and in that sense he died for them; that is, to furnish them with the means of averting divine justice, which their crimes had provoked.

What, he again asks, *would we think of a man who allowed another to die for a crime which he himself had committed?* I answer that a man who, by any contrivance, causes his own offense to be visited upon the head of an innocent person is unspeakably depraved. But are Christians guilty of this baseness because they accept the blessings of an institution which their great benefactor died to establish? Loyalty to the King who has erected a most beneficent government for us at the cost of his life—fidelity to the Master who bought us with his blood—is not the fraudulent substitution of an innocent person in place of a criminal.

*The doctrine of non-resistance, forgiveness of injuries, reconciliation with enemies, as taught in the New Testament, is the child of weakness, degrading, and unjust.* This is the whole substance of a long, rambling diatribe, as incoherent as a sick man's dream. Christianity does not forbid the necessary defense of civil society, or the proper vindication of personal rights. But to cherish animosity, to thirst for mere revenge, to hoard up wrongs, real or fancied, and lie in wait for the chance of paying them back; to be impatient, unforgiving, malicious, and cruel to all who have crossed us—these diabolical propensities are checked and curbed by the authority and spirit of the Christian religion, and the application of it has converted men from low savages into refined and civilized beings.

*The punishment of sinners in eternal hell is excessive.* The future of the soul is a subject on which we have very dark views. In our present state, the mind takes in no idea except what is conveyed to it through the bodily senses. All our conceptions of the spiritual world are derived from some analogy to material things, and this analogy must necessarily be very remote, because the nature of the subjects compared is so diverse that a close similarity cannot be even supposed. No revelation has lifted the veil between time and eternity; but in shadowy figures we are warned that a very marked distinction will be made between the good and the bad in the next world. Speculative opinions concerning the punishment of the wicked, its nature and dura-

tion, vary with the temper and the imaginations of men. Doubtless we are many of us in error: but how can Mr. Ingersoll enlighten us? Acknowledging no standard of right and wrong in this world, he can have no theory of rewards and punishments in the next. The deeds done in the body, whether good or evil, are all morally alike in his eyes, and if there be in heaven a congregation of the just, he sees no reason why the worst rogue should not be a member of it. It is supposed, however, that man has a soul as well as a body, and that both are subject to certain laws, which cannot be violated without incurring the proper penalty—or consequence, if he likes that word better.

*If Christ was God, he knew that his followers would persecute and murder men for their opinions; yet he did not forbid it.* There is but one way to deal with this accusation, and that is to contradict it flatly. Nothing can be conceived more striking than the prohibition, not only of persecution, but of all the passions which lead or incite to it. No follower of Christ indulges in malice even to his enemy without violating the plainest rule of his faith. He cannot love God and hate his brother: if he says he can, St. John pronounces him a liar. The broadest benevolence, universal philanthropy, inexhaustible charity, are inculcated in every line of the New Testament. It is plain that Mr. Ingersoll never read a chapter of it; otherwise he would not have ventured upon this palpable falsification of its doctrines. Who told him that the devilish spirit of persecution was authorized, or encouraged, or not forbidden, by the Gospel? The person, whoever it was, who imposed upon his trusting ignorance should be given up to the just reprobation of his fellow-citizens.

*Christians in modern times carry on wars of detraction and slander against one another.* The discussions of theological subjects by men who believe in the fundamental doctrines of Christ are singularly free from harshness and abuse. Of course I cannot speak with absolute certainty, but I believe most confidently that there is not in all the religious polemics of this century as much slanderous invective as can be found in any ten lines of Mr. Ingersoll's writings. Of course I do not include political preachers among my models of charity and forbearance. They are a mendacious set, but Christianity is no more responsible for their misconduct than it is for the treachery of Judas Iscariot or the wrongs done to Paul by Alexander the coppersmith.

*But, says he, Christians have been guilty of wanton and wicked persecution.* It is true that some persons, professing Christianity, have violated the fundamental principles of their faith by inflicting violent injuries and bloody wrongs upon their fellow-men. But the perpetrators of these outrages were in fact not Christians: they were either hypocrites from the beginning or else base apostates—infidels or something worse—hireling wolves, whose gospel was their maw. Not one of them ever pretended to find a warrant for his conduct in any precept of Christ or any doctrine of his Church. All the wrongs of this nature which history records have been the work of politicians, aided often by priests and ministers who were willing to deny their Lord and desert to the enemy, for the sake of their temporal interests. Take the cases most commonly cited and see if this be not a true account of them. The *auto da fé* of Spain and Portugal, the burnings at Smithfield, and the whipping of women in Massachusetts, were the outcome of a cruel, false, and antichristian policy. Coligny and his adherents were killed by an order of Charles IX., at the instance of the Guises, who headed a hostile faction, and merely for reasons of state. Louis XIV. revoked the edict of Nantes, and banished the Waldenses under pain of confiscation and death; but this was done on the declared ground that the victims were not safe subjects. The brutal atrocities of Cromwell and the outrages of the Orange lodges against the Irish Catholics were not persecutions by religious people, but movements as purely political as those of the Know-Nothings, Plug-Uglys, and Blood-Tubs of this country. If the Gospel should be blamed for these acts in opposition to its principles, why not also charge it with the cruelties of Nero, or the present persecution of the Jesuits by the infidel republic of France?

*Christianity is opposed to freedom of thought.* The kingdom of Christ is based upon certain principles, to which it requires the assent of every one who would enter therein. If you are unwilling to own his authority and conform your moral conduct to his laws, you cannot expect that he will admit you to the privileges of his government. But naturalization is not forced upon you if you prefer to be an alien. The Gospel makes the strongest and tenderest appeal to the heart, reason, and conscience of man—entreats him to take thought for his own highest interest, and by all its moral influence provokes him to good works; but he is



not constrained by any kind of duress to leave the service or relinquish the wages of sin. Is there anything that savors of tyranny in this? A man of ordinary judgment will say, no. But Mr. Ingersoll thinks it as oppressive as the refusal of Jehovah to reward the worship of demons.

*The gospel of Christ does not satisfy the hunger of the heart.* That depends upon what kind of a heart it is. If it hungers after righteousness, it will surely be filled. It is probable, also, that if it hungers for the filthy food of a godless philosophy it will get what its appetite demands. That was an expressive phrase which Carlyle used when he called modern infidelity "the gospel of dirt." Those who are greedy to swallow it will doubtless be supplied satisfactorily.

*Accounts of miracles are always false.* Are miracles impossible? No one will say so who opens his eyes to the miracles of creation with which we are surrounded on every hand. You cannot even show that they are *a priori* improbable. God would be likely to reveal his will to the rational creatures who were required to obey it; he would authenticate in some way the right of prophets and apostles to speak in his name; supernatural power was the broad seal which he affixed to their commission. From this it follows that the improbability of a miracle is no greater than the original improbability of a revelation, and that is not improbable at all. Therefore, if the miracles of the New Testament are proved by sufficient evidence, we believe them as we believe any other established fact. They become deniable only when it is shown that the great miracle of making the world was never performed. Accordingly Mr. Ingersoll abolishes creation first, and thus clears the way to his dogmatic conclusion that *all* miracles are "the children of mendacity."

*Christianity is pernicious in its moral effect, darkens the mind, narrows the soul, arrests the progress of human society, and hinders civilization.* Mr. Ingersoll, as a zealous apostle of "the gospel of dirt," must be expected to throw a good deal of mud. But this is too much: it injures himself instead of defiling the object of his assault. When I answer that all we have of virtue, justice, intellectual liberty, moral elevation, refinement, benevolence, and true wisdom came to us from that source which he reviles as the fountain of evil, I am not merely putting one assertion against the other; for I have the advantage, which he has not, of speaking what every tolerably well-informed man knows to be true.

Reflect what kind of a world this was when the disciples of Christ undertook to reform it, and compare it with the condition in which their teachings have put it. In its mighty metropolis, the center of its intellectual and political power, the best men were addicted to vices so debasing that I could not even allude to them without soiling the paper I write upon. All manner of unprincipled wickedness was practiced in the private life of the whole population without concealment or shame, and the magistrates were thoroughly and universally corrupt. Benevolence in any shape was altogether unknown. The helpless and the weak got neither justice nor mercy. There was no relief for the poor, no succor for the sick, no refuge for the unfortunate. In all pagandom there was not a hospital, asylum, almshouse, or organized charity of any sort. The indifference to human life was literally frightful. The order of a successful leader to assassinate his opponents was always obeyed by his followers with the utmost alacrity and pleasure. It was a special amusement of the populace to witness the shows at which men were compelled to kill one another, to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, or otherwise "butchered, to make a Roman holiday." In every province paganism enacted the same cold-blooded cruelties; oppression and robbery ruled supreme; murder went rampaging and red over all the earth. The Church came, and her light penetrated this moral darkness like a new sun. She covered the globe with institutions of mercy, and thousands upon thousands of her disciples devoted themselves exclusively to works of charity at the sacrifice of every earthly interest. Her earliest adherents were killed without remorse—beheaded, crucified, sawn asunder, thrown to the beasts, or covered with pitch, piled up in great heaps, and slowly burnt to death. But her faith was made perfect through suffering, and the law of love rose in triumph from the ashes of her martyrs. This religion has come down to us through the ages, attended all the way by righteousness, justice, temperance, mercy, transparent truthfulness, exulting hope, and white-winged charity. Never was its influence for good more plainly perceptible than now. It has not converted, purified, and reformed all men, for its first principle is the freedom of the human will, and there are those who choose to reject it. But to the mass of mankind, directly and indirectly, it has brought uncounted benefits and blessings. Abolish it—take away the restraints which it imposes on evil passions—silence the

admonitions of its preachers—let all Christians cease their labors of charity—blot out from history the records of its heroic benevolence—repeal the laws it has enacted and the institutions it has built up—let its moral principles be abandoned and all its miracles of light be extinguished—what would we come to? I need not answer this question: the experiment has been partially tried. The French nation formally renounced Christianity, denied the existence of the Supreme Being, and so satisfied the hunger of the infidel heart for a time. What followed? Universal depravity, garments rolled in blood, fantastic crimes unimagined before, which startled the earth with their sublime atrocity. The American people have and ought to have no special desire to follow that terrible example of guilt and misery.

It is impossible to discuss this subject within the limits of a review. No doubt the effort to be short has made me obscure. If Mr. Ingersoll thinks himself wronged, or his doctrines misconstrued, let him not lay my fault at the door of the Church, or cast his censure on the clergy.

*"Adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum."*

J. S. BLACK.

# THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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## III.

BY ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

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“Apart from moral conduct, all that man thinks himself able to do, in order to become acceptable to God, is mere superstition and religious folly.”

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KANT.

SEVERAL months ago, THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW asked me to write an article, saying that it would be published if some one would furnish a reply. I wrote the article that appeared in the August number, and by me it was entitled “Is All of the Bible Inspired?” Not until the article was written did I know who was expected to answer. I make this explanation for the purpose of dissipating the impression that Mr. Black had been challenged by me. To have struck his shield with my lance might have given birth to the impression that I was somewhat doubtful as to the correctness of my position. I naturally expected an answer from some professional theologian, and was surprised to find that a reply had been written by a “policeman,” who imagined that he had answered my arguments by simply telling me that my statements were false. It is somewhat unfortunate that in a discussion like this any one should resort to the slightest personal detraction. The theme is great enough to engage the highest faculties of the human mind, and in the investigation of such a subject vituperation is singularly and vulgarly out of place. Arguments cannot be answered with insults. It is unfortunate that the intellectual arena should be entered by a “policeman,” who has more confidence in concussion than discussion. Kindness is strength. Good-nature is often mistaken for virtue, and good health sometimes passes for genius. Anger blows out the lamp of the mind. In the examination of a great and important question, every one should be serene, slow-pulsed, and calm. Intelligence is not the foundation of arrogance. Insolence is not logic. Epi-

thets are the arguments of malice. Candor is the courage of the soul. Leaving the objectionable portions of Mr. Black's reply, feeling that so grand a subject should not be blown and tainted with malicious words, I proceed to answer as best I may the arguments he has urged.

I am made to say that "the universe is natural"; that "it came into being of its own accord"; that "it made its own laws at the start, and afterward improved itself considerably by spontaneous evolution."

I did say that "the universe is natural," but I did not say that "it came into being of its own accord"; neither did I say that "it made its own laws and afterward improved itself." The universe, according to my idea, is, always was, and forever will be. It did not "come into being," it is the one eternal being,—the only thing that ever did, does, or can exist. It did not "make its own laws." We know nothing of what we call the laws of nature except as we gather the idea of law from the uniformity of phenomena springing from like conditions. To make myself clear: Water always runs down-hill. The theist says that this happens because there is behind the phenomenon an active law. As a matter of fact, law is this side of the phenomenon. Law does not cause the phenomenon, but the phenomenon causes the idea of law in our minds; and this idea is produced from the fact that under like circumstances the same phenomenon always happens. Mr. Black probably thinks that the difference in the weight of rocks and clouds was created by law; that parallel lines fail to unite only because it is illegal; that diameter and circumference could have been so made that it would be a greater distance across than around a circle; that a straight line could inclose a triangle if not prevented by law, and that a little legislation could make it possible for two bodies to occupy the same space at the same time. It seems to me that law cannot be the cause of phenomena, but is an effect produced in our minds by their succession and resemblance. To put a God back of the universe, compels us to admit that there was a time when nothing existed except this God; that this God had lived from eternity in an infinite vacuum, and in absolute idleness. The mind of every thoughtful man is forced to one of these two conclusions: either that the universe is self-existent, or that it was created by a self-existent being. To my mind, there are far more difficulties in the second hypothesis than in the first.



Of course, upon a question like this, nothing can be absolutely known. We live on an atom called Earth, and what we know of the infinite is almost infinitely limited; but, little as we know, all have an equal right to give their honest thought. Life is a shadowy, strange, and winding road on which we travel for a little way—a few short steps—just from the cradle, with its lullaby of love, to the low and quiet way-side inn, where all at last must sleep, and where the only salutation is—Good-night.

I know as little as any one else about the “plan” of the universe; and as to the “design,” I know just as little. It will not do to say that the universe was designed, and therefore there must be a designer. There must first be proof that it was “designed.” It will not do to say that the universe has a “plan,” and then assert that there must have been an infinite maker. The idea that a design must have a beginning and that a designer need not, is a simple expression of human ignorance. We find a watch, and we say: “So curious and wonderful a thing must have had a maker.” We find the watch-maker, and we say: “So curious and wonderful a thing as man must have had a maker.” We find God, and we then say: “He is so wonderful that he must *not* have had a maker.” In other words, all things a little wonderful must have been created, but it is possible for a something to be so wonderful that it always existed. One would suppose that just as the wonder increased the necessity for a creator increased, because it is the wonder of the thing that suggests the idea of creation. Is it possible that a designer exists from all eternity without design? Was there no design in having an infinite designer? For me, it is hard to see the plan or design in earthquakes and pestilences. It is somewhat difficult to discern the design or the benevolence in so making the world that billions of animals live only on the agonies of others. The justice of God is not visible to me in the history of this world. When I think of the suffering and death, of the poverty and crime, of the cruelty and malice, of the heartlessness of this “design” and “plan,” where beak and claw and tooth tear and rend the quivering flesh of weakness and despair, I cannot convince myself that it is the result of infinite wisdom, benevolence, and justice.

Most Christians have seen and recognized this difficulty, and have endeavored to avoid it by giving God an opportunity in another world to rectify the seeming mistakes of this. Mr.

Black, however, avoids the entire question by saying: "We have neither jurisdiction nor capacity to rejudge the justice of God." In other words, we have no right to think upon this subject, no right to examine the questions most vitally affecting human kind. We are simply to accept the ignorant statements of barbarian dead. This question cannot be settled by saying that "it would be a mere waste of time and space to enumerate the proofs which show that the Universe was created by a preëxistent and self-conscious Being." The time and space should have been "wasted," and the proofs should have been enumerated. These "proofs" are what the wisest and greatest are trying to find. Logic is not satisfied with assertion. It cares nothing for the opinions of the "great,"—nothing for the prejudices of the many, and least of all for the superstitions of the dead. In the world of Science, a fact is a legal tender. Assertions and miracles are base and spurious coins. We have the right to rejudge the justice even of a god. No one should throw away his reason—the fruit of all experience. It is the intellectual capital of the soul, the only light, the only guide, and without it the brain becomes the palace of an idiot king, attended by a retinue of thieves and hypocrites.

Of course it is admitted that most of the Ten Commandments are wise and just. In passing, it may be well enough to say, that the commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth," was the absolute death of Art, and that not until after the destruction of Jerusalem was there a Hebrew painter or sculptor. Surely a commandment is not inspired that drives from earth the living canvas and the breathing stone—leaves all walls bare and all the niches desolate. In the Tenth Commandment we find woman placed on an exact equality with other property, which, to say the least of it, has never tended to the amelioration of her condition.

A very curious thing about these Commandments is that their supposed author violated nearly every one. From Sinai, according to the account, he said: "Thou shalt not kill," and yet he ordered the murder of millions; "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and yet he gave captured maidens to gratify the lust of captors; "Thou shalt not steal," and yet he gave to Jewish marauders the flocks and herds of others; "Thou shalt not covet

thy neighbor's house, nor his wife," and yet he allowed his chosen people to destroy the homes of neighbors and to steal their wives; "Honor thy father and thy mother," and yet this same God had thousands of fathers butchered, and with the sword of war killed children yet unborn; "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," and yet he sent abroad "lying spirits" to deceive his own prophets, and in a hundred ways paid tribute to deceit. So far as we know, Jehovah kept only one of these Commandments—he worshiped no other god.

The religious intolerance of the Old Testament is justified upon the ground that "blasphemy was a breach of political allegiance," that "idolatry was an act of overt treason," and that "to worship the gods of the hostile heathen was deserting to the public enemy, and giving him aid and comfort." According to Mr. Black, we should all have liberty of conscience except when directly governed by God. In that country where God is king, liberty cannot exist. In this position, I admit that he is upheld and fortified by the "sacred" text. Within the Old Testament there is no such thing as religious toleration. Within that volume can be found no mercy for an unbeliever. For all who think for themselves, there are threatenings, curses, and anathemas. Think of an infinite being who is so cruel, so unjust, that he will not allow one of his own children the liberty of thought! Think of an infinite God acting as the direct governor of a people, and yet not able to command their love! Think of the author of all mercy imbruing his hands in the blood of helpless men, women, and children, simply because he did not furnish them with intelligence enough to understand his law! An earthly father who cannot govern by affection is not fit to be a father; what, then, shall we say of an infinite being who resorts to violence, to pestilence, to disease, and famine, in the vain effort to obtain even the respect of a savage? Read this passage, red from the heart of cruelty:

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, . . . thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shalt thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people; and thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die." . . .

This is the religious liberty of the Bible. If you had lived in Palestine, and if the wife of your bosom, dearer to you than your own soul, had said: "I like the religion of India better than that of Palestine," it would have been your duty to kill her. "Your eye must not pity her, your hand must be first upon her, and afterwards the hand of all the people." If she had said: "Let us worship the sun—the sun that clothes the earth in garments of green—the sun, the great fireside of the world—the sun that covers the hills and valleys with flowers—that gave me your face, and made it possible for me to look into the eyes of my babe—let us worship the sun," it was your duty to kill her. You must throw the first stone, and when against her bosom—a bosom filled with love for you—you had thrown the jagged and cruel rock, and had seen the red stream of her life oozing from the dumb lips of death, you could then look up and receive the congratulations of the God whose commandment you had obeyed. Is it possible that a being of infinite mercy ordered a husband to kill his wife for the crime of having expressed an opinion on the subject of religion? Has there been found upon the records of the savage world anything more perfectly fiendish than this commandment of Jehovah? This is justified on the ground that "blasphemy was a breach of political allegiance, and idolatry an act of overt treason." We can understand how a human king stands in need of the service of his people. We can understand how the desertion of any of his soldiers weakens his army; but were the king infinite in power, his strength would still remain the same, and under no conceivable circumstances could the enemy triumph.

I insist that, if there is an infinitely good and wise God, he beholds with pity the misfortunes of his children. I insist that such a God would know the mists, the clouds, the darkness enveloping the human mind. He would know how few stars are visible in the intellectual sky. His pity, not his wrath, would be excited by the efforts of his blind children, groping in the night to find the cause of things, and endeavoring, through their tears, to see some dawn of hope. Filled with awe by their surroundings, by fear of the unknown, he would know that when, kneeling, they poured out their gratitude to some unseen power, even to a visible idol, it was, in fact, intended for him. An infinitely good being, had he the power, would answer the reasonable prayer of an honest savage, even when addressed to wood and stone.

The atrocities of the Old Testament, the threatenings, maledictions, and curses of the "inspired book," are defended on the ground that the Jews had a right to treat their enemies as their enemies treated them; and in this connection is this remarkable statement: "In your treatment of hostile barbarians you not only may lawfully, you must necessarily, adopt their mode of warfare. If they come to conquer you, they may be conquered by you; if they give no quarter, they are entitled to none; if the death of your whole population be their purpose, you may defeat it by exterminating theirs."

For a man who is a "Christian policeman," and has taken upon himself to defend the Christian religion; for one who follows the Master who said that when smitten on one cheek you must turn the other, and who again and again enforced the idea that you must overcome evil with good, it is hardly consistent to declare that a civilized nation must of necessity adopt the warfare of savages. Is it possible that in fighting, for instance, the Indians of America, if they scalp our soldiers we should scalp theirs? If they ravish, murder, and mutilate our wives, must we treat theirs in the same manner? If they kill the babes in our cradles, must we brain theirs? If they take our captives, bind them to trees, and if their squaws fill their quivering flesh with sharpened fagots and set them on fire, that they may die clothed with flame, must our wives, our mothers, and our daughters follow the fiendish example? Is this the conclusion of the most enlightened Christianity? Will the pulpits of the United States adopt the arguments of this "policeman"? Is this the last and most beautiful blossom of the Sermon on the Mount? Is this the echo of "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do"?

Mr. Black justifies the wars of extermination and conquest because the American people fought for the integrity of their own country; fought to do away with the infamous institution of slavery; fought to preserve the jewels of liberty and justice for themselves and for their children. Is it possible that his mind is so clouded by political and religious prejudice, by the recollections of an unfortunate administration, that he sees no difference between a war of extermination and one of self-preservation? that he sees no choice between the murder of helpless age, of weeping women and of sleeping babes, and the defense of liberty and nationality?



The soldiers of the Republic did not wage a war of extermination. They did not seek to enslave their fellow-men. They did not murder trembling age. They did not sheathe their swords in women's breasts. They gave the old men bread, and let the mothers rock their babes in peace. They fought to save the world's great hope—to free a race and put the humblest hut beneath the canopy of liberty and law.

Claiming neither praise nor dispraise for the part taken by me in the civil war, for the purposes of this argument, it is sufficient to say that I am perfectly willing that my record, poor and barren as it is, should be compared with his.

Never for an instant did I suppose that any respectable American citizen could be found willing at this day to defend the institution of slavery; and never was I more astonished than when I found Mr. Black denying that civilized countries passionately assert that slavery is and always was a hideous crime. I was amazed when he declared that "the doctrine that slavery is a crime under all circumstances and at all times was first started by the adherents of a political faction in this country less than forty years ago." He tells us that "they denounced God and Christ for not agreeing with them," but that "they did not constitute the civilized world; nor were they, if the truth must be told, a very respectable portion of it. Politically they were successful; I need not say by what means, or with what effect upon the morals of the country."

Slavery held both branches of Congress, filled the chair of the Executive, sat upon the supreme bench, had in its hands all rewards, all offices; knelt in the pew, occupied the pulpit, stole human beings in the name of God, robbed the trundle-bed for love of Christ; incited mobs, led ignorance, ruled colleges, sat in the chairs of professors, dominated the public press, closed the lips of free speech, and polluted with its leprous hand every source and spring of power. The abolitionists attacked this monster. They were the bravest, grandest men of their country and their century. Denounced by thieves, hated by hypocrites, mobbed by cowards, slandered by priests, shunned by politicians, abhorred by the seekers of office,—these men "of whom the world was not worthy," in spite of all opposition, in spite of poverty and want, conquered innumerable obstacles, never faltering for one moment, never dismayed—accepting defeat with a smile born of infinite hope—knowing that they were right—

insisted and persisted until every chain was broken, until slave-pens became school-houses, and three millions of slaves became free men, women, and children. They did not measure with "the golden metewand of God," but with "the elastic cord of human feeling." They were men the latchets of whose shoes no believer in human slavery was ever worthy to unloose. And yet we are told by this modern defender of the slavery of Jehovah that they were not even respectable; and this slander is justified because the writer is assured "that the infallible God proceeded upon good grounds when he authorized slavery in Judea."

Not satisfied with having slavery in this world, Mr. Black assures us that it will last through all eternity, and that forever and forever inferiors must be subordinated to superiors. Who is the superior man? According to Mr. Black, he is superior who lives upon the unpaid labor of the inferior. With me, the superior man is the one who uses his superiority in bettering the condition of the inferior. The superior man is strength for the weak, eyes for the blind, brains for the simple; he is the one who helps carry the burden that nature has put upon the inferior. Any man who helps another to gain and retain his liberty is superior to any infallible God who authorized slavery in Judea. For my part, I would rather be the slave than the master. It is better to be robbed than to be a robber. I had rather be stolen from than to be a thief.

According to Mr. Black, there will be slavery in heaven, and fast by the throne of God will be the auction-block, and the streets of the New Jerusalem will be adorned with the whipping-post, while the music of the harp will be supplemented by the crack of the driver's whip. If some good Republican would catch Mr. Black, "incorporate him into his family, tame him, teach him to think, and give him a knowledge of the true principles of human liberty and government, he would confer upon him a most beneficent boon."

Slavery includes all other crimes. It is the joint product of the kidnapper, pirate, thief, murderer, and hypocrite. It degrades labor and corrupts leisure. To lacerate the naked back, to sell wives, to steal babes, to breed blood-hounds, to debauch your own soul—this is slavery. This is what Jehovah "authorized in Judea." This is what Mr. Black believes in still. He "measures with the golden metewand of God." I abhor slavery. With me,

liberty is not merely a means—it is an end. Without that word, all other words are empty sounds.

Mr. Black is too late with his protest against the freedom of his fellow-man. Liberty is making the tour of the world. Russia has emancipated her serfs; the slave trade is prosecuted only by thieves and pirates; Spain feels upon her cheek the burning blush of shame; Brazil with proud and happy eyes is looking for the dawn of freedom's day; the people of the South rejoice that slavery is no more, and every good and honest man (excepting Mr. Black), of every land and clime, hopes that the limbs of men will never feel again the weary weight of chains.

We are informed by Mr. Black that polygamy is neither commanded nor prohibited in the Old Testament—that it is only “discouraged.” It seems to me that a little legislation on that subject might have tended to its “discouragement.” But where is the legislation? In the moral code, which Mr. Black assures us “consists of certain immutable rules to govern the conduct of all men at all times and at all places in their private and personal relation with others,” not one word is found on the subject of polygamy. There is nothing “discouraging” in the Ten Commandments, nor in the records of any conversation Jehovah is claimed to have had with Moses upon Sinai. The life of Abraham, the story of Jacob and Laban, the duty of a brother to be the husband of the widow of his deceased brother, the life of David, taken in connection with the practice of one who is claimed to have been the wisest of men—all these things are probably relied on to show that polygamy was at least “discouraged.” Certainly, Jehovah had time to instruct Moses as to the infamy of polygamy. He could have spared a few moments from a description of the patterns of tongs and basins, for a subject so important as this. A few words in favor of the one wife and the one husband—in favor of the virtuous and loving home—might have taken the place of instructions as to cutting the garments of priests and fashioning candlesticks and ouches of gold. If he had left out simply the order that rams' skins should be dyed red, and in its place had said, “A man shall have but one wife, and the wife but one husband,” how much better it would have been.

All the languages of the world are not sufficient to express the filth of polygamy. It makes man a beast, and woman a slave. It destroys the fireside and makes virtue an outcast. It takes us

back to the barbarism of animals, and leaves the heart a den in which crawl and hiss the slimy serpents of most loathsome lust. And yet Mr. Black insists that we owe to the Bible the present elevation of woman. Where will he find in the Old Testament the rights of wife, and mother, and daughter defined? Even in the New Testament she is told to "learn in silence with all subjection"; that she "is not suffered to teach, nor to usurp any authority over the man, but to be in silence." She is told that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." In other words, there is the same difference between the wife and husband that there is between the husband and Christ.

The reasons given for this infamous doctrine are that "Adam was first formed, and then Eve"; that "Adam was not deceived," but that "the woman being deceived, was in the transgression." These childish reasons are the only ones given by the inspired writers. We are also told that "a man, indeed, ought to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God"; but that "the woman is the glory of the man," and this is justified from the fact, and the remarkable fact, set forth in the very next verse—that "the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man." And the same gallant Apostle says: "Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man"; "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything." These are the passages that have liberated woman!

According to the Old Testament, woman had to ask pardon, and had to be purified, for the crime of having borne sons and daughters. If in this world there is a figure of perfect purity, it is a mother holding in her thrilled and happy arms her child. The doctrine that woman is the slave, or serf, of man—whether it comes from heaven or from hell, from God or a demon, from the golden streets of the New Jerusalem or from the very Sodom of perdition—is savagery, pure and simple.

In no country in the world had women less liberty than in the Holy Land, and no monarch held in less esteem the rights of wives and mothers than Jehovah of the Jews. The position of woman was far better in Egypt than in Palestine. Before the

pyramids were built, the sacred songs of Isis were sung by women, and women with pure hands had offered sacrifices to the gods. Before Moses was born, women had sat upon the Egyptian throne. Upon ancient tombs the husband and wife are represented as seated in the same chair. In Persia women were priests, and in some of the oldest civilizations "they were revered on earth, and worshiped afterward as goddesses in heaven." At the advent of Christianity, in all pagan countries women officiated at the sacred altars. They guarded the eternal fire. They kept the sacred books. From their lips came the oracles of fate. Under the domination of the Christian church, woman became the merest slave for at least a thousand years. It was claimed that through woman the race had fallen, and that her loving kiss had poisoned all the springs of life. Christian priests asserted that but for her crime the world would have been an Eden still. The ancient fathers exhausted their eloquence in the denunciation of woman, and repeated again and again the slander of St. Paul. The condition of woman has improved just in proportion that man has lost confidence in the inspiration of the Bible.

For the purpose of defending the character of his infallible God, Mr. Black is forced to defend religious intolerance, wars of extermination, human slavery, and *almost* polygamy. He admits that God established slavery; that he commanded his chosen people to buy the children of the heathen; that heathen fathers and mothers did right to sell their girls and boys; that God ordered the Jews to wage wars of extermination and conquest; that it was right to kill the old and young; that God forged manacles for the human brain; that he commanded husbands to murder their wives for suggesting the worship of the sun or moon; and that every cruel, savage passage in the Old Testament was inspired by him. Such is a "policeman's" view of God.

Will Mr. Black have the kindness to state a few of his objections to the devil?

Mr. Black should have answered my arguments, instead of calling me "blasphemous" and "scurrilous." In the discussion of these questions I have nothing to do with the reputation of my opponent. His character throws no light on the subject, and is to me a matter of perfect indifference. Neither will it do for one who enters the lists as the champion of revealed religion to



say that "we have no right to rejudge the justice of God." Such a statement is a white flag. The warrior eludes the combat when he cries out that it is a "metaphysical question." He deserts the field and throws down his arms when he admits that "no revelation has lifted the veil between time and eternity." Again I ask, why were the Jewish people as wicked, cruel, and ignorant with a revelation from God, as other nations were without? Why were the worshipers of false deities as brave, as kind, and generous as those who knew the only true and living God?

How do you explain the fact that while Jehovah was waging wars of extermination, establishing slavery, and persecuting for opinions' sake, heathen philosophers were teaching that all men are brothers, equally entitled to liberty and life? You insist that Jehovah believed in slavery and yet punished the Egyptians for enslaving the Jews. Was your God once an abolitionist? Did he at that time "denounce Christ for not agreeing with him"? If slavery was a crime in Egypt, was it a virtue in Palestine? Did God treat the Canaanites better than Pharaoh did the Jews? Was it right for Jehovah to kill the children of the people because of Pharaoh's sin? Should the peasant be punished for the king's crime? Do you not know that the worst thing that can be said of Nero, Caligula, and Commodus is that they resembled the Jehovah of the Jews? Will you tell me why God failed to give his Bible to the whole world? Why did he not give the Scriptures to the Hindu, the Greek, and Roman? Why did he fail to enlighten the worshipers of "Mammon" and Moloch, of Belial and Baal, of Bacchus and Venus? After all, was not Bacchus as good as Jehovah? Is it not better to drink wine than to shed blood? Was there anything in the worship of Venus worse than giving captured maidens to satisfy the victor's lust? Did "Mammon" or Moloch do anything more infamous than to establish slavery? Did they order their soldiers to kill men, women, and children, and to save alive nothing that had breath? Do not answer these questions by saying that "no veil has been lifted between time and eternity," and that "we have no right to rejudge the justice of God."

If Jehovah was in fact God, he knew the end from the beginning. He knew that his Bible would be a breastwork behind which tyranny and hypocrisy would crouch; that it would be quoted by tyrants; that it would be the defense of robbers called kings, and of hypocrites called priests. He knew that

he had taught the Jewish people but little of importance. He knew that he found them free and left them captives. He knew that he had never fulfilled the promises made to them. He knew that while other nations had advanced in art and science, his chosen people were savage still. He promised them the world, and gave them a desert. He promised them liberty, and he made them slaves. He promised them victory, and he gave them defeat. He said they should be kings, and he made them serfs. He promised them universal empire, and gave them exile. When one finishes the Old Testament, he is compelled to say: Nothing can add to the misery of a nation whose king is Jehovah!

And here I take occasion to thank Mr. Black for having admitted that Jehovah gave no commandment against the practice of polygamy, that he established slavery, waged wars of extermination, and persecuted for opinions' sake even unto death. Most theologians endeavor to putty, patch, and paint the wretched record of inspired crime, but Mr. Black has been bold enough and honest enough to admit the truth. In this age of fact and demonstration it is refreshing to find a man who believes so thoroughly in the monstrous and miraculous, the impossible and immoral—who still clings lovingly to the legends of the bib and rattle—who through the bitter experiences of a wicked world has kept the credulity of the cradle, and finds comfort and joy in thinking about the Garden of Eden, the subtil serpent, the flood, and Babel's tower, stopped by the jargon of a thousand tongues—who reads with happy eyes the story of the burning brimstone storm that fell upon the cities of the plain, and smilingly explains the transformation of the retrospective Mrs. Lot—who laughs at Egypt's plagues and Pharaoh's whelmed and drowning hosts—eats manna with the wandering Jews, warms himself at the burning bush, sees Korah's company by the hungry earth devoured, claps his wrinkled hands with glee above the heathens' butchered babes, and longingly looks back to the patriarchal days of concubines and slaves. How touching when the learned and wise crawl back in cribs and ask to hear the rhymes and fables once again! How charming in these hard and scientific times to see old age in Superstition's lap, with eager lips upon her withered breast!

Mr. Black comes to the conclusion that the Hebrew Bible is in exact harmony with the New Testament, and that the two are

"connected together"; and "that if one is true the other cannot be false."

If this is so, then he must admit that if one is false the other cannot be true; and it hardly seems possible to me that there is a right-minded, sane man, except Mr. Black, who now believes that a God of infinite kindness and justice ever commanded one nation to exterminate another; ever ordered his soldiers to destroy men, women, and babes; ever established the institution of human slavery; ever regarded the auction-block as an altar, or a blood-hound as an apostle.

Mr. Black contends (after having answered my indictment against the Old Testament by admitting the allegations to be true) that the rapidity with which Christianity spread "proves the supernatural origin of the Gospel, or that it was propagated by the direct aid of the Divine Being himself."

Let us see. In his efforts to show that the "infallible God established slavery in Judea," he takes occasion to say that "the doctrine that slavery is a crime under all circumstances was first started by the adherents of a political faction in this country less than forty years ago"; that "they denounced God and Christ for not agreeing with them"; but that "they did not constitute the civilized world; nor were they, if the truth must be told, a very respectable portion of it." Let it be remembered that this was only forty years ago; and yet, according to Mr. Black, a few disreputable men changed the ideas of nearly fifty millions of people, changed the Constitution of the United States, liberated a race from slavery, clothed three millions of people with political rights, took possession of the Government, managed its affairs for more than twenty years, and have compelled the admiration of the civilized world. Is it Mr. Black's idea that this happened by chance? If not, then, according to him, there are but two ways to account for it: either the rapidity with which Republicanism spread proves its supernatural origin, "or else its propagation was provided for and carried on by the direct aid of the Divine Being himself." Between these two, Mr. Black may make his choice. He will at once see that the rapid rise and spread of any doctrine does not even tend to show that it was divinely revealed.

This argument is applicable to all religions. Mohammedans can use it as well as Christians. Mohammed was a poor man, a driver of camels. He was without education, without influence and without wealth, and yet in a few years he consoli-

dated thousands of tribes, and made millions of men confess that there is "one God, and Mohammed is his prophet." His success was a thousand times greater during his life than that of Christ. He was not crucified; he was a conqueror. "Of all men, he exercised the greatest influence upon the human race." Never in the world's history did a religion spread with the rapidity of his. It burst like a storm over the fairest portions of the globe. If Mr. Black is right in his position that rapidity is secured only by the direct aid of the Divine Being, then Mohammed was most certainly the prophet of God. As to wars of extermination and slavery, Mohammed agreed with Mr. Black, and upon polygamy, with Jehovah. As to religious toleration, he was great enough to say that "men holding to any form of faith might be saved, provided they were virtuous." In this, he was far in advance both of Jehovah and Mr. Black.

It will not do to take the ground that the rapid rise and spread of a religion demonstrates its divine character. Years before Guatama died, his religion was established, and his disciples were numbered by millions. His doctrines were not enforced by the sword, but by an appeal to the hopes, the fears, and the reason of mankind; and more than one-third of the human race are to-day the followers of Gautama. His religion has outlived all that existed in his time; and according to Dr. Draper, "there is no other country in the world except India that has the religion to-day it had at the birth of Jesus Christ." Gautama believed in the equality of all men; abhorred the spirit of caste, and proclaimed justice, mercy, and education for all.

Imagine a Mohammedan answering an infidel; would he not use the argument of Mr. Black, simply substituting Mohammed for Christ, just as effectually as it has been used against me? There was a time when India was the foremost nation of the world. Would not your argument, Mr. Black, have been just as good in the mouth of a Brahmin then, as it is in yours now? Egypt, the mysterious mother of mankind, with her pyramids built thirty-four hundred years before Christ, was once the first in all the earth, and gave to us our trinity, and our symbol of the cross. Could not a priest of Isis and Osiris have used your arguments to prove that his religion was divine, and could he not have closed by saying: "From the facts established by this evidence it follows irresistibly that our religion came to us from God"? Do you not see that your argument proves too much,

and that it is equally applicable to all the religions of the world?

Again, it is urged that "the acceptance of Christianity by a large portion of the generation contemporary with its founder and his apostles was, under the circumstances, an adjudication as solemn and authoritative as mortal intelligence could pronounce." If this is true, then "the acceptance of Buddhism by a large portion of the generation contemporary with its founder was an adjudication as solemn and authoritative as mortal intelligence could pronounce." The same could be said of Mohammedanism, and, in fact, of every religion that has ever benefited or cursed this world. This argument, when reduced to its simplest form, is this: All that succeeds is inspired.

The old argument that if Christianity is a human fabrication its authors must have been either good men or bad men, takes it for granted that there are but two classes of persons—the good and the bad. There is, at least, one other class—the *mistaken*, and both of the other classes may belong to this. Thousands of most excellent people have been deceived, and the history of the world is filled with instances where men have honestly supposed that they had received communications from angels and gods.

In thousands of instances these pretended communications contained the purest and highest thoughts, together with the most important truths; yet it will not do to say that these accounts are true; neither can they be proved by saying that the men who claimed to be inspired were good. What we must say is, that being good men, they were mistaken; and it is the charitable mantle of a mistake that I throw over Mr. Black, when I find him defending the institution of slavery. He seems to think it utterly incredible that any "combination of knaves, however base, would fraudulently concoct a religious system to denounce themselves, and to invoke the curse of God upon their own conduct." How did religions other than Christianity and Judaism arise? Were they all "concocted by a combination of knaves"? The religion of Gautama is filled with most beautiful and tender thoughts, with most excellent laws, and hundreds of sentences urging mankind to deeds of love and self-denial. Was Gautama inspired?

Does not Mr. Black know that thousands of people charged with witchcraft actually confessed in open court their guilt? Does he not know that they admitted that they had spoken false



to face with Satan, and had sold their souls for gold and power? Does he not know that these admissions were made in the presence and expectation of death? Does he not know that hundreds of judges, some of them as great as the late lamented Gibson, believed in the existence of an impossible crime?

We are told that "there is no good reason to doubt that the statements of the Evangelists, as we have them now, are genuine." The fact is, no one knows who made the "statements of the Evangelists."

There are three important manuscripts upon which the Christian world relies. "The first appeared in the catalogue of the Vatican, in 1475. This contains the Old Testament. Of the New, it contains the four gospels,—the Acts, the seven Catholic Epistles, nine of the Pauline Epistles, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, as far as the fourteenth verse of the ninth chapter,"—and nothing more. This is known as the Codex Vatican. "The second, the Alexandrine, was presented to King Charles the First, in 1628. It contains the Old and New Testaments, with some exceptions; passages are wanting in Matthew, in John, and in II. Corinthians. It also contains the Epistle of Clemens Romanus, a letter of Athanasius, and the treatise of Eusebius on the Psalms." The last is the Sinaitic Codex, discovered about 1850, at the Convent of St. Catherine's, on Mount Sinai. "It contains the Old and New Testaments, and in addition the entire Epistle of Barnabas, and a portion of the Shepherd of Hermas—two books which, up to the beginning of the fourth century, were looked upon by many as Scripture." In this manuscript, or codex, the gospel of St. Mark concludes with the eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter, leaving out the frightful passage: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

In matters of the utmost importance these manuscripts disagree, but even if they all agreed it would not furnish the slightest evidence of their truth. It will not do to call the statements made in the gospels "depositions," until it is absolutely established who made them, and the circumstances under which they were made. Neither can we say that "they were made in the immediate prospect of death," until we know who made them. It is absurd to say that "the witnesses could not have been mistaken, because the nature of the facts precluded the

possibility of any delusion about them." Can it be pretended that the witnesses could not have been mistaken about the relation the Holy Ghost is alleged to have sustained to Jesus Christ? Is there no possibility of delusion about a circumstance of that kind? Did the writers of the four gospels have "the sensible and true avouch of their own eyes' and ears" in that behalf? How was it possible for any one of the four Evangelists to know that Christ was the Son of God, or that he was God? His mother wrote nothing on the subject. Matthew says that an angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream, but Joseph never wrote an account of this wonderful vision. Luke tells us that the angel had a conversation with Mary, and that Mary told Elizabeth, but Elizabeth never wrote a word. There is no account of Mary, or Joseph, or Elizabeth, or the angel, having had any conversation with Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, in which one word was said about the miraculous origin of Jesus Christ. The persons who knew did not write, so that the account is nothing but hearsay. Does Mr. Black pretend that such statements would be admitted as evidence in any court? But how do we know that the disciples of Christ wrote a word of the gospels? How did it happen that Christ wrote nothing? How do we know that the writers of the gospels "were men of unimpeachable character"?

All this is answered by saying "that nothing was said by the most virulent enemies against the personal honesty of the Evangelists." How is this known? If Christ performed the miracles recorded in the New Testament, why would the Jews put to death a man able to raise their dead? Why should they attempt to kill the Master of Death? How did it happen that a man who had done so many miracles was so obscure, so unknown, that one of his disciples had to be bribed to point him out? Is it not strange that the ones he had cured were not his disciples? Can we believe, upon the testimony of those about whose character we know nothing, that Lazarus was raised from the dead? What became of Lazarus? We never hear of him again. It seems to me that he would have been an object of great interest. People would have said: "He is the man who was once dead." Thousands would have inquired of him about the other world; would have asked him where he was when he received the information that he was wanted on the earth. His experience would have been vastly more interesting than everything else in the New Testament. A returned traveler from the shores of

Eternity—one who had walked twice through the valley of the shadow—would have been the most interesting of human beings. When he came to die again, people would have said: “He is not afraid; he has had experience; he knows what death is.” But, strangely enough, this Lazarus fades into obscurity with “the wise men of the East,” and with the dead who came out of their graves on the night of the crucifixion. How is it known that it was claimed, during the life of Christ, that he had wrought a miracle? And if the claim was made, how is it known that it was not denied? Did the Jews believe that Christ was clothed with miraculous power? Would they have dared to crucify a man who had the power to clothe the dead with life? Is it not wonderful that no one at the trial of Christ said one word about the miracles he had wrought? Nothing about the sick he had healed, nor the dead he had raised?

Is it not wonderful that Josephus, the best historian the Hebrews produced, says nothing about the life or death of Christ; nothing about the massacre of the infants by Herod; not one word about the wonderful star that visited the sky at the birth of Christ; nothing about the darkness that fell upon the world for several hours in the midst of day; and failed entirely to mention that hundreds of graves were opened, and that multitudes of Jews arose from the dead, and visited the Holy City? Is it not wonderful that no historian ever mentioned any of these prodigies? and is it not more amazing than all the rest, that Christ himself concealed from Matthew, Mark, and Luke the dogma of the atonement, the necessity of belief, and the mystery of the second birth?

Of course I know that two letters were said to have been written by Pilate to Tiberius, concerning the execution of Christ, but they have been shown to be forgeries. I also know that “various letters were circulated attributed to Jesus Christ,” and that one letter is said to have been written by him to Abgarus, king of Edessa; but as there was no king of Edessa at that time, this letter is admitted to have been a forgery. I also admit that a correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul was forged.

Here in our own country, only a few years ago, men claimed to have found golden plates upon which was written a revelation from God. They founded a new religion, and, according to their statement, did many miracles. They were treated as outcasts, and their leader was murdered. These men made their “depo-

sitions" "in the immediate prospect of death." They were mobbed, persecuted, derided, and yet they insisted that their prophet had miraculous power, and that he, too, could swing back the hingeless door of death. The followers of these men have increased, in these few years, so that now the murdered prophet has at least two hundred thousand disciples. It will be hard to find a contradiction of these pretended miracles, although this is an age filled with papers, magazines, and books. As a matter of fact, the claims of Joseph Smith were so preposterous that sensible people did not take the pains to write and print denials. When we remember that eighteen hundred years ago there were but few people who could write, and that a manuscript did not become public in any modern sense, it was possible for the gospels to have been written with all the foolish claims in reference to miracles without exciting comment or denial. There is not, in all the contemporaneous literature of the world, a single word about Christ or his apostles. The paragraph in Josephus is admitted to be an interpolation, and the letters, the account of the trial, and several other documents forged by the zeal of the early fathers, are now admitted to be false.

Neither will it do to say that "the statements made by the evangelists are alike upon every important point." If there is anything of importance in the New Testament, from the theological stand-point, it is the ascension of Jesus Christ. If that happened, it was a miracle great enough to surfeit wonder. Are the statements of the inspired witnesses alike on this important point? Let us see.

Matthew says nothing upon the subject. Either Matthew was not there, had never heard of the ascension,—or, having heard of it, did not believe it, or, having seen it, thought it too unimportant to record. To this wonder of wonders Mark devotes one verse: "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right-hand of God." Can we believe that this verse was written by one who witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ; by one who watched his Master slowly rising through the air till distance reft him from his tearful sight? Luke, another of the witnesses, says: "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." John corroborates Matthew, by saying nothing on the subject. Now we find that the last chapter of

Mark, after the eighth verse, is an interpolation; so that Mark really says nothing about the occurrence. Either the ascension of Christ must be given up, or it must be admitted that the witnesses do not agree, and that three of them never heard of that most stupendous event.

Again, if anything could have left its "form and pressure" on the brain, it must have been the last words of Jesus Christ. The last words, according to Matthew, are: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The last words, according to the inspired witness known as Mark, are: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Luke tells us that the last words uttered by Christ, with the exception of a blessing, were: "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." The last words, according to John, were: "Peter, seeing Him, saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

An account of the ascension is also given in the Acts of the Apostles; and the last words of Christ, according to that inspired witness, are: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." In this account of the ascension we find that two men stood by the disciples in white apparel, and asked them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Matthew says nothing of the two men. Mark never saw them. Luke may have forgotten them when writing his gospel, and John may have regarded them as optical illusions.

Luke testifies that Christ ascended on the very day of his resurrection. John deposes that eight days after the resurrection Christ appeared to the disciples and convinced Thomas. In the



Acts we are told that Christ remained on earth for forty days after his resurrection. These "depositions" do not agree. Neither do Matthew and Luke agree in their histories of the infancy of Christ. It is impossible for both to be true. One of these "witnesses" must have been mistaken.

The most wonderful miracle recorded in the New Testament, as having been wrought by Christ, is the resurrection of Lazarus. While all the writers of the gospels, in many instances, record the same wonders and the same conversations, is it not remarkable that the greatest miracle is mentioned alone by John?

Two of the witnesses, Matthew and Luke, give the genealogy of Christ. Matthew says that there were forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ. Luke insists that there were forty-two from Christ to David, while Matthew gives the number as twenty-eight. It may be said that this is an old objection. An objection remains young until it has been answered. Is it not wonderful that Luke and Matthew do not agree on a single name of Christ's ancestors for thirty-seven generations?

There is a difference of opinion among the "witnesses" as to what the gospel of Christ is. If we take the "depositions" of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, then the gospel of Christ amounts simply to this: That God will forgive the forgiving, and that he will be merciful to the merciful. According to three witnesses, Christ knew nothing of the doctrine of the atonement; never heard of the second birth; and did not base salvation, in whole nor in part, on belief. In the "deposition" of John, we find that we must be born again; that we must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and that an atonement was made for us. If Christ ever said these things to, or in the hearing of, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they forgot to mention them.

To my mind, the failure of the evangelists to agree as to what is necessary for man to do in order to insure the salvation of his soul, is a demonstration that they were not inspired.

Neither do the witnesses agree as to the last words of Christ when he was crucified. Matthew says that he cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark agrees with Matthew. Luke testifies that his last words were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." John states that he cried: "It is finished."

Luke says that Christ said of his murderers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Matthew, Mark, and John do not record these touching words. John says that Christ,

on the day of his resurrection, said to his disciples: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

The other disciples do not record this monstrous passage. They did not hear the abdication of God. They were not present when Christ placed in their hands the keys of heaven and hell, and put a world beneath the feet of priests.

It is easy to account for the differences and contradictions in these "depositions" (and there are hundreds of them) by saying that each one told the story as he remembered it, or as he had heard it, or that the accounts have been changed, but it will not do to say that the witnesses were inspired of God. We can account for these contradictions by the infirmities of human nature; but, as I said before, the infirmities of human nature cannot be predicated of a divine being.

Again, I ask, why should there be more than one inspired gospel? Of what use were the other three? There can be only one true account of anything. All other true accounts must simply be copies of that. And I ask again, why should there have been more than one inspired gospel? That which is the test of truth as to ordinary witnesses is a demonstration against their inspiration. It will not do at this late day to say that the miracles worked by Christ demonstrated his divine origin or mission. The wonderful works he did, did not convince the people with whom he lived. In spite of the miracles, he was crucified. He was charged with blasphemy. "Policemen" denounced the "scurrility" of his words, and the absurdity of his doctrines. He was no doubt told that it was "almost a crime to utter blasphemy in the presence of a Jewish woman"; and it may be that he was taunted for throwing away "the golden metewand" of the "infallible God who authorized slavery in Judea," and taking the "elastic cord of human feeling."

Christians tell us that the citizens of Mecca refused to believe on Mohammed because he was an impostor, and that the citizens of Jerusalem refused to believe on Jesus Christ because he was *not* an impostor.

If Christ had wrought the miracles attributed to him—if he had cured the maimed, the leprous, and the halt—if he had changed the night of blindness into blessed day—if he had wrested from the fleshless hand of avaricious death the stolen jewel of a life, and clothed again with throbbing flesh the pulse-

less dust, he would have won the love and adoration of mankind. If ever there shall stand upon this earth the king of death, all human knees will touch the ground.

We are further informed that "what we call the fundamental truths of Christianity consist of great public events which are sufficiently established by history without special proof."

Of course, we admit that the Roman Empire existed; that Julius Cæsar was assassinated; and we may admit that Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus; but will some one be kind enough to tell us how the assassination of Cæsar even tends to prove that Romulus and Remus were suckled by a wolf? We will all admit that, in the sixth century after Christ, Mohammed was born at Mecca; that his victorious hosts vanquished half the Christian world; that the crescent triumphed over the cross upon a thousand fields; that all the Christians of the earth were not able to rescue from the hands of an impostor the empty grave of Christ. We will all admit that the Mohammedans cultivated the arts and sciences; that they gave us our numerals; taught us the higher mathematics; gave us our first ideas of astronomy, and that "science was thrust into the brain of Europe on the point of a Moorish lance"; and yet we will not admit that Mohammed was divinely inspired, nor that he had frequent conversations with the angel Gabriel, nor that after his death his coffin was suspended in mid-air.

A little while ago, in the city of Chicago, a gentleman addressed a number of Sunday-school children. In his address, he stated that some people were wicked enough to deny the story of the deluge; that he was a traveler; that he had been to the top of Mount Ararat, and had brought with him a stone from that sacred locality. The children were then invited to form in procession and walk by the pulpit, for the purpose of seeing this wonderful stone. After they had looked at it, the lecturer said: "Now, children, if you ever hear anybody deny the story of the deluge, or say that the ark did not rest on Mount Ararat, you can tell them that you know better, because you have seen with your own eyes a stone from that very mountain."

The fact that Christ lived in Palestine does not tend to show that he was in any way related to the Holy Ghost; nor does the existence of the Christian religion substantiate the ascension of Jesus Christ. We all admit that Socrates lived in Athens, but we do not admit that he had a familiar spirit. I am satisfied that John

Wesley was an Englishman, but I hardly believe that God postponed a rain because Mr. Wesley wanted to preach. All the natural things in the world are not sufficient to establish the supernatural. Mr. Black reasons in this way: There was a hydra-headed monster. We know this, because Hercules killed him. There must have been such a woman as Proserpine, otherwise Pluto could not have carried her away. Christ must have been divine, because the Holy Ghost was his father. And there must have been such a being as the Holy Ghost, because without a father Christ could not have existed. Those who are disposed to deny everything because a part is false, reason exactly the other way. They insist that because there was no hydra-headed monster, Hercules did not exist. The true position, in my judgment, is that the natural is not to be discarded because found in the company of the miraculous, neither should the miraculous be believed because associated with the probable. There was in all probability such a man as Jesus Christ. He may have lived in Jerusalem. He may have been crucified, but that he was the Son of God, or that he was raised from the dead, and ascended bodily to Heaven, has never been, and, in the nature of things, can never be, substantiated.

Apparently tired with his efforts to answer what I really said, Mr. Black resorted to the expedient of "compressing" my propositions and putting them in italics. By his system of "compression" he was enabled to squeeze out what I really said, and substitute a few sentences of his own. I did not say that "Christianity offers eternal salvation as the reward of belief alone," but I did say that no salvation is offered *without* belief. There must be a difference of opinion in the minds of Mr. Black's witnesses on this subject. In one place we are told that a man is "justified by faith without the deeds of the law"; and in another, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness"; and the following passages seem to show the necessity of belief:

"He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die." "For the gifts and calling of God

are without repentance." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "Whosoever believeth not shall be damned."

I do not understand that the Christians of to-day insist that simple belief will secure the salvation of the soul. I believe it is stated in the Bible that "the very devils believe"; and it would seem from this that belief is not such a meritorious thing, after all. But Christians do insist that without belief no man can be saved; that faith is necessary to salvation, and that there is "none other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved," except that of Christ. My doctrine is that there is only one way to be saved, and that is to act in harmony with your surroundings—to live in accordance with the facts of your being. A Being of infinite wisdom has no right to create a person destined to everlasting pain. For the honest infidel, according to the American Evangelical pulpit, there is no heaven. For the upright atheist, there is nothing in another world but punishment. Mr. Black admits that lunatics and idiots are in no danger of hell. This being so, his God should have created only lunatics and idiots. Why should the fatal gift of brain be given to any human being, if such gift renders him liable to eternal hell? Better be a lunatic here and an angel there. Better be an idiot in this world, if you can be a seraph in the next.

As to the doctrine of the atonement, Mr. Black has nothing to offer except the barren statement that it is believed by the wisest and the best. A Mohammedan, speaking in Constantinople, will say the same of the Koran. A Brahman, in a Hindu temple, will make the same remark, and so will the American Indian, when he endeavors to enforce something upon the young of his tribe. He will say: "The best, the greatest of our tribe have believed in this." This is the argument of the cemetery, the philosophy of epitaphs, the logic of the coffin. Who are the greatest and wisest and most virtuous of mankind? This statement, that it has been believed by the best, is made in connection with an admission that it cannot be fathomed by the wisest. It is not claimed that a thing is necessarily false because it is not understood, but I do claim that it is not necessarily true because it cannot be comprehended. I still insist that "the plan of redemption," as usually preached, is absurd, unjust, and immoral.



For nearly two thousand years Judas Iscariot has been execrated by mankind; and yet, if the doctrine of the atonement is true, upon his treachery hung the plan of salvation. Suppose Judas had known of this plan—known that he was selected by Christ for that very purpose, that Christ was depending on him. And suppose that he also knew that only by betraying Christ could he save either himself or others; what ought Judas to have done? Are you willing to rely upon an argument that justifies the treachery of that wretch?

I insisted upon knowing how the sufferings of an innocent man could satisfy justice for the sins of the guilty. To this, Mr. Black replies as follows: "This raises a metaphysical question, which it is not necessary or possible for me to discuss here." Is this considered an answer? Is it in this way that "my misty creations are made to roll away and vanish into air one after another"? Is this the best that can be done by one of the disciples of the infallible God who butchered babes in Judea? Is it possible for a "policeman" to "silence a rude disturber" in this way? To answer an argument, is it only necessary to say that it "raises a metaphysical question"? Again I say: The life of Christ is worth its example, its moral force, its heroism of benevolence. And again I say: The effort to vindicate a law by inflicting punishment on the innocent is a second violation instead of a vindication.

Mr. Black, under the pretense of "compressing," puts in my mouth the following: "The doctrine of non-resistance, forgiveness of injuries, reconciliation with enemies, as taught in the New Testament, is the child of weakness, degrading and unjust."

This is entirely untrue. What I did say is this: "The idea of non-resistance never occurred to a man who had the power to protect himself. This doctrine was the child of weakness, born when resistance was impossible." I said not one word against the forgiveness of injuries, not one word against the reconciliation of enemies—not one word. I believe in the reconciliation of enemies. I believe in a reasonable forgiveness of injuries. But I do not believe in the doctrine of non-resistance. Mr. Black proceeds to say that Christianity forbids us "to cherish animosity, to thirst for mere revenge, to hoard up wrongs real or fancied, and lie in wait for the chance of paying them back; to be impatient, unforgiving, malicious, and cruel to all who have crossed us." And yet the man who thus describes Christianity tells us

that it is not only our right, but our duty, to fight savages as savages fight us; insists that where a nation tries to exterminate us, we have a right to exterminate them. This same man, who tells us that "the diabolical propensities of the human heart are checked and curbed by the spirit of the Christian religion," and that this religion "has converted men from low savages into refined and civilized beings," still insists that the author of the Christian religion established slavery, waged wars of extermination, abhorred the liberty of thought, and practiced the divine virtues of retaliation and revenge. If it is our duty to forgive our enemies, ought not God to forgive his? Is it possible that God will hate his enemies when he tells us that we must love ours? The enemies of God cannot injure him, but ours can injure us. If it is the duty of the injured to forgive, why should the uninjured insist upon having revenge? Why should a being who destroys nations with pestilence and famine expect that his children will be loving and forgiving?

Mr. Black insists that without a belief in God there can be no perception of right and wrong, and that it is impossible for an atheist to have a conscience. Mr. Black, the Christian, the believer in God, upholds wars of extermination. I denounce such wars as murder. He upholds the institution of slavery. I denounce that institution as the basest of crimes. Yet I am told that I have no knowledge of right and wrong; that I measure with "the elastic cord of human feeling," while the believer in slavery and wars of extermination measures with "the golden metewand of God."

What is right and what is wrong? Everything is right that tends to the happiness of mankind, and everything is wrong that increases the sum of human misery. What can increase the happiness of this world more than to do away with every form of slavery, and with all war? What can increase the misery of mankind more than to increase wars and put chains upon more human limbs? What is conscience? If man were incapable of suffering, if man could not feel pain, the word "conscience" never would have passed his lips. The man who puts himself in the place of another, whose imagination has been cultivated to the point of feeling the agonies suffered by another, is the man of conscience. But a man who justifies slavery, who justifies a God when he commands the soldier to rip open the mother and pierce with the sword of war the child unborn, is

controlled and dominated, not by conscience, but by a cruel and remorseless superstition.

Consequences determine the quality of an action. If consequences are good, so is the action. If actions had no consequences, they would be neither good nor bad. Man did not get his knowledge of the consequences of actions from God, but from experience and reason. If man can, by actual experiment, discover the right and wrong of actions, is it not utterly illogical to declare that they who do not believe in God can have no standard of right and wrong? Consequences are the standard by which actions are judged. They are the children that testify as to the real character of their parents. God or no God, larceny is the enemy of industry—industry is the mother of prosperity—prosperity is a good, and therefore larceny is an evil. God or no God, murder is a crime. There has always been a law against larceny, because the laborer wishes to enjoy the fruit of his toil. As long as men object to being killed, murder will be illegal.

According to Mr. Black, the man who does not believe in a supreme being acknowledges no standard of right and wrong in this world, and therefore can have no theory of rewards and punishments in the next. Is it possible that only those who believe in the God who persecuted for opinion's sake have any standard of right and wrong? Were the greatest men of all antiquity without this standard? In the eyes of intelligent men of Greece and Rome, were all deeds, whether good or evil, morally alike? Is it necessary to believe in the existence of an infinite intelligence before you can have any standard of right and wrong? Is it possible that a being cannot be just or virtuous unless he believes in some being infinitely superior to himself? If this doctrine be true, how can God be just or virtuous? Does he believe in some being superior to himself?

It may be said that the Pagans believed in a god, and consequently had a standard of right and wrong. But the Pagans did not believe in the "true" God. They knew nothing of Jehovah. Of course it will not do to believe in the wrong god. In order to know the difference between right and wrong, you must believe in the right God—in the one who established slavery. Can this be avoided by saying that a false god is better than none?

The idea of justice is not the child of superstition—it was not born of ignorance; neither was it nurtured by the passages in

the Old Testament upholding slavery, wars of extermination, and religious persecution. Every human being necessarily has a standard of right and wrong; and where that standard has not been polluted by superstition, man abhors slavery, regards a war of extermination as murder, and looks upon religious persecution as a hideous crime. If there is a God, infinite in power and wisdom, above him, poised in eternal calm, is the figure of Justice. At the shrine of Justice the infinite God must bow, and in her impartial scales the actions even of Infinity must be weighed. There is no world, no star, no heaven, no hell in which gratitude is not a virtue and where slavery is not a crime.

According to the logic of this "reply," all good and evil become mixed and mingled—equally good and equally bad, unless we believe in the existence of the infallible God who ordered husbands to kill their wives. We do not know right from wrong now, unless we are convinced that a being of infinite mercy waged wars of extermination four thousand years ago. We are incapable even of charity, unless we worship the being who ordered the husband to kill his wife for differing with him on the subject of religion.

We know that acts are good or bad only as they affect the actors, and others. We know that from every good act good consequences flow, and that from every bad act there are only evil results. Every virtuous deed is a star in the moral firmament. There is in the moral world, as in the physical, the absolute and perfect relation of cause and effect. For this reason, the atonement becomes an impossibility. Others may suffer by your crime, but their suffering cannot discharge you; it simply increases your guilt and adds to your burden. For this reason happiness is not a reward—it is a consequence. Suffering is not a punishment—it is a result.

It is insisted that Christianity is not opposed to freedom of thought, but that "it is based on certain principles to which it requires the assent of all." Is this a candid statement? Are we only required to give our assent to certain principles in order to be saved? Are the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, the atonement, and the Trinity, principles? Will it be admitted by the orthodox world that good deeds are sufficient unto salvation—that a man can get into heaven by living in accordance with certain principles? This is a most excellent doctrine, but it is not Christianity. And right here, it may be

well enough to state what I mean by Christianity. The morality of the world is not distinctively Christian. Zoroaster, Gautama, Mohammed, Confucius, Christ, and, in fact, all founders of religions, have said to their disciples: You must not steal; You must not murder; You must not bear false witness; You must discharge your obligations. Christianity is the ordinary moral code, *plus* the miraculous origin of Jesus Christ, his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension, the inspiration of the Bible, the doctrine of the atonement, and the necessity of belief. Buddhism is the ordinary moral code, *plus* the miraculous illumination of Buddha, the performance of certain ceremonies, a belief in the transmigration of the soul, and in the final absorption of the human by the infinite. The religion of Mohammed is the ordinary moral code, *plus* the belief that Mohammed was the prophet of God, total abstinence from the use of intoxicating drinks, a harem for the faithful here and hereafter, ablutions, prayers, alms, pilgrimages, and fasts.

The morality in Christianity has never opposed the freedom of thought. It has never put, nor tended to put, a chain on a human mind, nor a manacle on a human limb; but the doctrines distinctively Christian—the necessity of believing a certain thing; the idea that eternal punishment awaited him who failed to believe; the idea that the innocent can suffer for the guilty—these things have opposed, and for a thousand years substantially destroyed, the freedom of the human mind. All religions have, with ceremony, magic, and mystery, deformed, darkened, and corrupted the soul. Around the sturdy oaks of morality have grown and clung the parasitic, poisonous vines of the miraculous and monstrous.

I have insisted, and I still insist, that it is impossible for a finite man to commit a crime deserving infinite punishment; and upon this subject Mr. Black admits that “no revelation has lifted the veil between time and eternity”; and, consequently, neither the priest nor the “policeman” knows anything with certainty regarding another world. He simply insists that “in shadowy figures we are warned that a very marked distinction will be made between the good and bad in the next world.” There is “a very marked distinction” in this; but there is this rainbow on the darkest human cloud: The worst have hope of reform. All I insist is, if there is another life, the basest soul that finds its way to that dark or radiant shore will have the



everlasting chance of doing right. Nothing but the most cruel ignorance, the most heartless superstition, the most ignorant theology, ever imagined that the few days of human life spent here, surrounded by mists and clouds of darkness, blown over life's sea by storms and tempests of passion, fixed for all eternity the condition of the human race. If this doctrine be true, this life is but a net, in which Jehovah catches souls for hell.

The idea that a certain belief is necessary to salvation unsheathed the swords and lighted the fagots of persecution. As long as heaven is the reward of creed instead of deed, just so long will every orthodox church be a bastille, every member a prisoner, and every priest a turnkey.

In the estimation of good orthodox Christians, I am a criminal, because I am trying to take from loving mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and lovers the consolations naturally arising from a belief in an eternity of grief and pain. I want to tear, break, and scatter to the winds the God that priests erected in the fields of innocent pleasure—a God made of sticks, called creeds, and of old clothes, called myths. I have tried to take from the coffin its horror, from the cradle its curse, and put out the fires of revenge kindled by the savages of the past. Is it necessary that heaven should borrow its light from the glare of hell? Infinite punishment is infinite cruelty, endless injustice, immortal meanness. To worship an eternal gaoler hardens, debases, and pollutes the soul. While there is one sad and breaking heart in the universe, no perfectly good being can be perfectly happy. Against the heartlessness of this doctrine every grand and generous soul should enter its solemn protest. I want no part in any heaven where the saved, the ransomed, and redeemed drown with merry shouts the cries and sobs of hell—in which happiness forgets misery—where the tears of the lost increase laughter and deepen the dimples of joy. The idea of hell was born of ignorance, brutality, fear, cowardice, and revenge. This idea tends to show that our remote ancestors were the lowest beasts. Only from dens, lairs, and caves—only from mouths filled with cruel fangs—only from hearts of fear and hatred—only from the conscience of hunger and lust—only from the lowest and most debased, could come this most cruel, heartless, and absurd of all dogmas.

Our ancestors knew but little of nature. They were too astonished to investigate. They could not divest themselves

of the idea that everything happened with reference to them; that they caused storms and earthquakes; that they brought the tempest and the whirlwind; that on account of something they had done, or omitted to do, the lightning of vengeance leaped from the darkened sky. They made up their minds that at least two vast and powerful beings presided over this world; that one was good and the other bad; that both of these beings wished to get control of the souls of men; that they were relentless enemies, eternal foes; that both welcomed recruits and hated deserters; that one offered rewards in this world, and the other in the next. Man saw cruelty and mercy in nature, because he imagined that phenomena were produced to punish or to reward him. It was supposed that God demanded worship; that he loved to be flattered; that he delighted in sacrifice; that nothing made him happier than to see ignorant faith upon its knees; that above all things he hated and despised doubters and heretics, and regarded investigation as rebellion. Each community felt it a duty to see that the enemies of God were converted or killed. To allow a heretic to live in peace was to invite the wrath of God. Every public evil—every misfortune—was accounted for by something the community had permitted or done. When epidemics appeared, brought by ignorance and welcomed by filth, the heretic was brought out and sacrificed to appease the anger of God. By putting intention behind what man called good, God was produced. By putting intention behind what man called bad, the Devil was created. Leave this “intention” out, and gods and devils fade away. If not a human being existed, the sun would continue to shine, and tempest now and then would devastate the earth; the rain would fall in pleasant showers; violets would spread their velvet bosoms to the sun, the earthquake would devour, birds would sing and daisies bloom and roses blush, and volcanoes fill the heavens with their lurid glare; the procession of the seasons would not be broken, and the stars would shine as serenely as though the world were filled with loving hearts and happy homes. Do not imagine that the doctrine of eternal revenge belongs to Christianity alone. Nearly all religions have had this dogma for a corner-stone. Upon this burning foundation nearly all have built. Over the abyss of pain rose the glittering dome of pleasure. This world was regarded as one of trial. Here, a God of infinite wisdom experimented with man. Between the outstretched paws of

the Infinite, the mouse—man—was allowed to play. Here, man had the opportunity of hearing priests and kneeling in temples. Here, he could read, and hear read, the sacred books. Here, he could have the example of the pious and the counsels of the holy. Here, he could build churches and cathedrals. Here, he could burn incense, fast, wear hair-cloth, deny himself all the pleasures of life, confess to priests, construct instruments of torture, bow before pictures and images, and persecute all who had the courage to despise superstition, and the goodness to tell their honest thoughts. After death, if he died out of the church, nothing could be done to make him better. When he should come into the presence of God, nothing was left except to damn him. Priests might convert him here, but God could do nothing there. All of which shows how much more a priest can do for a soul than its creator. Only here, on the earth, where the devil is constantly active, only where his agents attack every soul, is there the slightest hope of moral improvement. Strange! that a world cursed by God, filled with temptations, and thick with fiends, should be the only place where man can repent, the only place where reform is possible!

Masters frightened slaves with the threat of hell, and slaves got a kind of shadowy revenge by whispering back the threat. The imprisoned imagined a hell for their gaolers; the weak built this place for the strong; the arrogant for their rivals; the vanquished for their victors; the priest for the thinker; religion for reason; superstition for science. All the meanness, all the revenge, all the selfishness, all the cruelty, all the hatred, all the infamy of which the heart of man is capable, grew, blossomed, and bore fruit in this one word—Hell. For the nourishment of this dogma, cruelty was soil, ignorance was rain, and fear was light.

Why did Mr. Black fail to answer what I said in relation to the doctrine of inspiration? Did he consider that a “metaphysical question”? Let us see what inspiration really is. A man looks at the sea, and the sea says something to him. It makes an impression on his mind. It awakens memory, and this impression depends upon his experience—upon his intellectual capacity. Another looks upon the same sea. He has a different brain; he has a different experience. The sea may speak to him of joy, to the other of grief and tears. The sea cannot tell the same thing to any two human beings, because no two human beings have had

the same experience. One may think of wreck and ruin, and another, while listening to the "multitudinous laughter of the sea," may say: Every drop has visited all the shores of earth; every one has been frozen in the vast and icy North, has fallen in snow, has whirled in storms around the mountain peaks, been kissed to vapor by the sun, worn the seven-hued robe of light, fallen in pleasant rain, gurgled from springs, and laughed in brooks while lovers wooed upon the banks. Everything in nature tells a different story to all eyes that see and to all ears that hear. So, when we look upon a flower, a painting, a statue, a star, or a violet, the more we know, the more we have experienced, the more we have thought, the more we remember, the more the statue, the star, the painting, the violet has to tell. Nature says to me all that I am capable of understanding—gives all that I can receive. As with star, or flower, or sea, so with a book. A thoughtful man reads Shakespeare. What does he get? All that he has the mind to understand. Let another read him, who knows nothing of the drama, nothing of the impersonations of passion, and what does he get? Almost nothing. Shakespeare has a different story for each reader. He is a world in which each recognizes his acquaintances. The impression that nature makes upon the mind, the stories told by sea and star and flower, must be the natural food of thought. Leaving out for the moment the impressions gained from ancestors, the hereditary fears and drifts and trends—the natural food of thought must be the impressions made upon the brain by coming in contact through the medium of the senses with what we call the outward world. The brain is natural; its food is natural; the result, thought, must be natural. Of the supernatural we have no conception. Thought may be deformed, and the thought of one may be strange to, and denominated unnatural by, another; but it cannot be supernatural. It may be weak, it may be insane, but it is not supernatural. Above the natural, man cannot rise. There can be deformed ideas, as there are deformed persons. There may be religions monstrous and misshapen, but they were naturally produced. The world is to each man according to each man. It takes the world as it really is and that man to make that man's world.

You may ask, And what of all this? I reply, As with everything in nature, so with the Bible. It has a different story for each reader. Is, then, the Bible a different book to every human



being who reads it? It is. Can God, through the Bible, make precisely the same revelation to two persons? He cannot. Why? Because the man who reads is not inspired. God should inspire readers as well as writers.

You may reply: God knew that his book would be understood differently by each one, and intended that it should be understood as it is understood by each. If this is so, then my understanding of the Bible is the real revelation to me. If this is so, I have no right to take the understanding of another. I must take the revelation made to me through my understanding, and by that revelation I must stand. Suppose, then, that I read this Bible honestly, fairly, and when I get through am compelled to say, "The book is not true." If this is the honest result, then you are compelled to say, either that God has made no revelation to me, or that the revelation that it is not true is the revelation made to me, and by which I am bound. If the book and my brain are both the work of the same infinite God, whose fault is it that the book and brain do not agree? Either God should have written a book to fit my brain, or should have made my brain to fit his book. The inspiration of the Bible depends upon the credulity of him who reads. There was a time when its geology, its astronomy, its natural history, were thought to be inspired: that time has passed. There was a time when its morality satisfied the men who ruled the world of thought: that time has passed.

Mr. Black, continuing his process of compressing my propositions, attributes to me the following statement: "The gospel of Christ does not satisfy the hunger of the heart." I did not say this. What I did say is: "The dogmas of the past no longer reach the level of the highest thought, nor satisfy the hunger of the heart." In so far as Christ taught any doctrine in opposition to slavery, in favor of intellectual liberty, upholding kindness, enforcing the practice of justice and mercy, I most cheerfully admit that his teachings should be followed. Such teachings do not need the assistance of miracles. They are not in the region of the supernatural. They find their evidence in the glad response of every honest heart that superstition has not touched and stained. The great question under discussion is, whether the immoral, absurd, and infamous can be established by the miraculous. It cannot be too often repeated, that truth scorns the assistance of miracle. That which actually happens



sets in motion innumerable effects, which, in turn, become causes producing other effects. These are all "witnesses" whose "depositions" continue. What I insist on is, that a miracle cannot be established by human testimony. We have known people to be mistaken. We know that all people will not tell the truth. We have never seen the dead raised. When people assert that they have, we are forced to weigh the probabilities, and the probabilities are on the other side. It will not do to assert that the universe was created, and then say that such creation was miraculous, and, therefore, all miracles are possible. We must be sure of our premises. Who knows that the universe was created? If it was not; if it has existed from eternity; if the present is the necessary child of all the past, then the miraculous is the impossible. Throw away all the miracles of the New Testament, and the good teachings of Christ remain—all that is worth preserving will be there still. Take from what is now known as Christianity the doctrine of the atonement, the fearful dogma of eternal punishment, the absurd idea that a certain belief is necessary to salvation, and with most of the remainder the good and intelligent will most heartily agree.

Mr. Black attributes to me the following expression: "Christianity is pernicious in its moral effect, darkens the mind, narrows the soul, arrests the progress of human society, and hinders civilization." I said no such thing. Strange, that he is only able to answer what I did not say. I endeavored to show that the passages in the Old Testament upholding slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious intolerance had filled the world with blood and crime. I admitted that there are many wise and good things in the Old Testament. I also insisted that the doctrine of the atonement—that is to say, of moral bankruptcy—the idea that a certain belief is necessary to salvation, and the frightful dogma of eternal pain, had narrowed the soul, had darkened the mind, and had arrested the progress of human society. Like other religions, Christianity is a mixture of good and evil. The church has made more orphans than it has fed. It has never built asylums enough to hold the insane of its own making. It has shed more blood than light.

Mr. Black seems to think that miracles are the most natural things imaginable, and wonders that anybody should be insane enough to deny the probability of the impossible. He regards all who doubt the miraculous origin, the resurrection and ascension

of Jesus Christ, as afflicted with some "error of the moon," and declares that their "disbelief seems like a kind of insanity."

To ask for evidence is not generally regarded as a symptom of a brain diseased. Delusions, illusions, phantoms, hallucinations, apparitions, chimeras, and visions are the common property of the religious and the insane. Persons blessed with sound minds and healthy bodies rely on facts, not fancies—on demonstrations, instead of dreams. It seems to me that the most orthodox Christians must admit that many of the miracles recorded in the New Testament are extremely childish. They must see that the miraculous draught of fishes, changing water into wine, fasting for forty days, inducing devils to leave an insane man by allowing them to take possession of swine, walking on the water, and using a fish for a pocket-book, are all unworthy of an infinite being, and are calculated to provoke laughter—to feed suspicion and engender doubt.

Mr. Black takes the ground that if a man believes in the creation of the universe—that being the most stupendous miracle of which the mind can conceive—he has no right to deny anything. He asserts that God created the universe; that creation was a miracle; that "God would be likely to reveal his will to the rational creatures who were required to obey it," and that he would authenticate his revelation by giving his prophets and apostles supernatural power.

After making these assertions, he triumphantly exclaims: "It therefore follows that the improbability of a miracle is no greater than the original improbability of a revelation, and that is not improbable at all."

How does he know that God made the universe? How does he know what God would be likely to do? How does he know that any revelation was made? And how did he ascertain that any of the apostles and prophets were intrusted with supernatural power? It will not do to prove your premises by assertions, and then claim that your conclusions are correct, because they agree with your premises.

If "God would be likely to reveal his will to the rational creatures who were required to obey it," why did he reveal it only to the Jews? According to Mr. Black, God is the only natural thing in the universe.

We should remember that ignorance is the mother of credulity; that the early Christians believed everything but the

truth, and that they accepted Paganism, admitted the reality of all the Pagan miracles—taking the ground that they were all forerunners of their own. Pagan miracles were never denied by the Christian world until late in the seventeenth century. Voltaire was the third man of note in Europe who denied the truth of Greek and Roman mythology. “The early Christians cited Pagan oracles predicting in detail the sufferings of Christ. They forged prophecies, and attributed them to the heathen sibyls, and they were accepted as genuine by the entire church.”

St. Irenæus assures us that all Christians possessed the power of working miracles; that they prophesied, cast out devils, healed the sick, and even raised the dead. St. Epiphanius asserts that some rivers and fountains were annually transmuted into wine, in attestation of the miracle of Cana, adding that he himself had drunk of these fountains. St. Augustine declares that one was told in a dream where the bones of St. Stephen were buried, that the bones were thus discovered, and brought to Hippo, and that they raised five dead persons to life, and that in two years seventy miracles were performed with these relics. Justin Martyr states that God once sent some angels to guard the human race, that these angels fell in love with the daughters of men, and became the fathers of innumerable devils.

For hundreds of years, miracles were about the only things that happened. They were wrought by thousands of Christians, and testified to by millions. The saints and martyrs, the best and greatest, were the witnesses and workers of wonders. Even heretics, with the assistance of the devil, could suspend the “laws of nature.” Must we believe these wonderful accounts because they were written by “good men,” by Christians, “who made their statements in the presence and expectation of death”? The truth is that these “good men” were mistaken. They expected the miraculous. They breathed the air of the marvelous. They fed their minds on prodigies, and their imaginations feasted on effects without causes. They were incapable of investigating. Doubts were regarded as “rude disturbers of the congregation.” Credulity and sanctity walked hand in hand. Reason was danger. Belief was safety. As the philosophy of the ancients was rendered almost worthless by the credulity of the common people, so the proverbs of Christ, his religion of forgiveness, his creed of kindness, were lost in the mist of miracle and the darkness of superstition.

If Mr. Black is right, there were no virtue, justice, intellectual liberty, moral elevation, refinement, benevolence, or true wisdom, until Christianity was established. He asserts that when Christ came, "benevolence, in any shape, was altogether unknown."

He insists that "the infallible God who authorized slavery in Judea" established a government; that he was the head and king of the Jewish people; that for this reason heresy was treason. Is it possible that God established a government in which benevolence was unknown? How did it happen that he established no asylums for the insane? How do you account for the fact that your God permitted some of his children to become insane? Why did Jehovah fail to establish hospitals and schools? Is it reasonable to believe that a good God would assist his chosen people to exterminate or enslave his other children? Why would your God people a world, knowing that it would be destitute of benevolence for four thousand years? Jehovah should have sent missionaries to the heathen. He ought to have reformed the inhabitants of Canaan. He should have sent teachers, not soldiers—missionaries, not murderers. A God should not exterminate his children; he should reform them.

Mr. Black gives us a terrible picture of the condition of the world at the coming of Christ; but did the God of Judea treat his own children, the Gentiles, better than the Pagans treated theirs? When Rome enslaved mankind—when with her victorious armies she sought to conquer or to exterminate tribes and nations, she but followed the example of Jehovah. Is it true that benevolence came with Christ, and that his coming heralded the birth of pity in the human heart? Does not Mr. Black know that, thousands of years before Christ was born, there were hospitals and asylums for orphans in China? Does he not know that in Egypt, before Moses lived, the insane were treated with kindness and wooed back to natural thought by music's golden voice? Does he not know that in all times, and in all countries, there have been great and loving souls who wrought, and toiled, and suffered, and died that others might enjoy? Is it possible that he knows nothing of the religion of Buddha—a religion based upon equality, charity, and forgiveness? Does he not know that, centuries before the birth of the great Peasant of Palestine, another, upon the plains of India, had taught the doctrine of forgiveness; and that, contrary to the tyranny of Jehovah, had given birth to the sublime declaration that all men are by nature free

and equal? Does he not know that a religion of absolute trust in God had been taught thousands of years before Jerusalem was built—a religion based upon absolute special Providence, carrying its confidence to the extremest edge of human thought, declaring that every evil is a blessing in disguise, and that every step taken by mortal man, whether in the rags of poverty or the royal robes of kings, is the step necessary to be taken by that soul in order to reach perfection and eternal joy? But how is it possible for a man who believes in slavery to have the slightest conception of benevolence, justice, or charity? If Mr. Black is right, even Christ believed and taught that man could buy and sell his fellow-man. Will the Christians of America admit this? Do they believe that Christ from heaven's throne mocked when colored mothers, reft of babes, knelt by empty cradles and besought his aid?

For the man Christ—for the reformer who loved his fellow-men—for the man who believed in an Infinite Father, who would shield the innocent and protect the just—for the martyr who expected to be rescued from the cruel cross, and who at last, finding that his hope was dust, cried out in the gathering gloom of death: "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?"—for that great and suffering man, mistaken though he was, I have the highest admiration and respect. That man did not, as I believe, claim ■ miraculous origin; he did not pretend to heal the sick nor raise the dead. He claimed simply to be a man, and taught his fellow-men that love is stronger far than hate. His life was written by reverent ignorance. Loving credulity belittled his career with feats of jugglery and magic art, and priests, wishing to persecute and slay, put in his mouth the words of hatred and revenge. The theological Christ is the impossible union of the human and divine—man with the attributes of God, and God with the limitations and weaknesses of man.

After giving a terrible description of the Pagan world, Mr. Black says: "The church came, and her light penetrated the moral darkness like a new sun; she covered the globe with institutions of mercy."

Is this true? Do we not know that when the Roman empire fell, darkness settled on the world? Do we not know that this darkness lasted for a thousand years, and that during all that time the church of Christ held, with bloody hands, the sword of power? These years were the starless midnight of our race. Art



died, law was forgotten, toleration ceased to exist, charity fled from the human breast, and justice was unknown. Kings were tyrants, priests were pitiless, and the poor multitude were slaves. In the name of Christ, men made instruments of torture, and the *auto da fé* took the place of the gladiatorial show. Liberty was in chains, honesty in dungeons, while Christian superstition ruled mankind. Christianity compromised with Paganism. The statues of Jupiter were used to represent Jehovah. Isis and her babe were changed to Mary and the infant Christ. The Trinity of Egypt became the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The simplicity of the early Christians was lost in heathen rites and Pagan pomp. The believers in the blessedness of poverty became rich, avaricious, and grasping, and those who had said, "Sell all, and give to the poor," became the ruthless gatherers of tithes and taxes. In a few years the teachings of Jesus were forgotten. The gospels were interpolated by the designing and ambitious. The church was infinitely corrupt. Crime was crowned, and virtue scourged. The minds of men were saturated with superstition. Miracles, apparitions, angels, and devils had possession of the world. "The nights were filled with incubi and succubi; devils, clad in wondrous forms, and imps in hideous shapes, sought to tempt or fright the soldiers of the cross. The maddened spirits of the air sent hail and storm. Sorcerers wrought sudden death, and witches worked with spell and charm against the common weal." In every town the stake arose. Faith carried fagots to the feet of philosophy. Priests—not "politicians"—fed and fanned the eager flames. The dungeon was the foundation of the cathedral. Priests sold charms and relics to their flocks to keep away the wolves of hell. Thousands of Christians, failing to find protection in the church, sold their poor souls to Satan for some magic wand. Suspicion sat in every house, families were divided, wives denounced husbands, husbands denounced wives, and children their parents. Every calamity then, as now, increased the power of the church. Pestilence supported the pulpit, and famine was the right hand of faith. Christendom was insane.

Will Mr. Black be kind enough to state at what time "the church covered the globe with institutions of mercy"? In his reply, he conveys the impression that these institutions were organized in the first century, or at least in the morning of Christianity. How many hospitals for the sick were established by the church during a thousand years? Do we not know that for hun-

dreds of years the Mohammedans erected more hospitals and asylums than the Christians? Christendom was filled with racks and thumb-screws, with stakes and fagots, with chains and dungeons, for centuries before a hospital was built. Priests despised doctors. Prayer was medicine. Physicians interfered with the sale of charms and relics. The church did not cure—it killed. It practiced surgery with the sword. The early Christians did not build asylums for the insane. They charged them with witchcraft, and burnt them. They built asylums, not for the mentally diseased, but for the mentally developed. These asylums were graves.

All the languages of the world have not words of horror enough to paint the agonies of man when the church had power. Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Domitian, and Commodus were not as cruel, false, and base as many of the Christian Popes. Opposite the names of these imperial criminals write John the XII., Leo the VIII., Boniface the VII., Benedict the IX., Innocent the III., and Alexander the VI. Was it under these pontiffs that the “church penetrated the moral darkness like a new sun,” and covered the globe with institutions of mercy? Rome was far better when Pagan than when Catholic. It was better to allow gladiators and criminals to fight than to burn honest men. The greatest of the Romans denounced the cruelties of the arena. Seneca condemned the combats even of wild beasts. He was tender enough to say that “we should have a bond of sympathy for all sentient beings, knowing that only the depraved and base take pleasure in the sight of blood and suffering.” Aurelius compelled the gladiators to fight with blunted swords. Roman lawyers declared that all men are by nature free and equal. Woman, under Pagan rule in Rome, became as free as man. Zeno, long before the birth of Christ, taught that virtue alone establishes a difference between men. We know that the CIVIL LAW is the foundation of our codes. We know that fragments of Greek and Roman art—a few manuscripts saved from Christian destruction, some inventions and discoveries of the Moors—were the seeds of modern civilization. Christianity, for a thousand years, taught memory to forget and reason to believe. Not one step was taken in advance. Over the manuscripts of philosophers and poets, priests, with their ignorant tongues thrust out, devoutly scrawled the forgeries of faith. For a thousand years the torch of progress was extinguished in the blood of Christ, and his disciples, moved by ignorant zeal, by

insane, cruel creeds, destroyed with flame and sword a hundred millions of their fellow-men. They made this world a hell. But if cathedrals had been universities—if dungeons of the Inquisition had been laboratories—if Christians had believed in character instead of creed—if they had taken from the Bible all the good and thrown away the wicked and absurd—if domes of temples had been observatories—if priests had been philosophers—if missionaries had taught the useful arts—if astrology had been astronomy—if the black art had been chemistry—if superstition had been science—if religion had been humanity—it would have been a heaven filled with love, with liberty, and joy.

We did not get our freedom from the church. The great truth, that all men are by nature free, was never told on Sinai's barren crags, nor by the lonely shores of Galilee.

The Old Testament filled this world with tyranny and crime, and the New gives us a future filled with pain for nearly all the sons of men. The Old describes the hell of the past, and the New the hell of the future. The Old tells us the frightful things that God has done—the New the cruel things that he will do. These two books give us the sufferings of the past and future—the injustice, the agony, and tears of both worlds. If the Bible is true—if Jehovah is God—if the lot of countless millions is to be eternal pain—better a thousand times that all the constellations of the shoreless vast were eyeless darkness and eternal space. Better that all that is should cease to be. Better that all the seeds and springs of things should fail and wither from great Nature's realm. Better that causes and effects should lose relation and become unmeaning phrases and forgotten sounds. Better that every life should change to breathless death, to voiceless blank, and every world to blind oblivion and to moveless naught.

Mr. Black justifies all the crimes and horrors, excuses all the tortures of all the Christian years, by denouncing the cruelties of the French Revolution. Thinking people will not hasten to admit that an infinitely good being authorized slavery in Judea, because of the atrocities of the French Revolution. They will remember the sufferings of the Huguenots. They will remember the massacre of St. Bartholomew. They will not forget the countless cruelties of priest and king. They will not forget the dungeons of the Bastille. They will know that the Revolution was an effect, and that liberty was not the cause—that atheism

was not the cause. Behind the Revolution they will see altar and throne—sword and fagot—palace and cathedral—king and priest—master and slave—tyrant and hypocrite. They will see that the excesses, the cruelties, and crimes were but the natural fruit of seeds the church had sown. But the Revolution was not entirely evil. Upon that cloud of war, black with the myriad miseries of a thousand years, dabbled with blood of king and queen, of patriot and priest, there was this bow: “Beneath the flag of France all men are free.” In spite of all the blood and crime, in spite of deeds that seem insanely base, the People placed upon a Nation’s brow these stars:—Liberty, Fraternity, Equality—grander words than ever issued from Jehovah’s lips.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

# THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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## IV.

BY GEORGE P. FISHER.

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I COMPLY with the request of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW that I should write an article on the Christian Religion. Not being ambitious to shine in the character of a *malleus hæreticorum*, I shall not enter the lists as a combatant in the debate which has lately been waged in its pages. Religious controversy is sometimes necessary; it is often useful; but it is always exposed to disadvantages. It is very apt to draw about it a multitude of readers whose interest in it is akin to that which animates the spectators of a cock-fight. It easily degenerates into a game of fence, where the vivacity and expertness of the competitors in the duel are of more consequence than the justice of the cause. Christianity is a large matter; the Bible is a large book, or rather collection of books forming a connected whole. It is easy for an ingenious mind to bring forward objections, suggest difficulties of greater or less weight, and propound mistaken or half-mistaken assertions. Of all warfare, guerilla fighting is the least satisfactory. It is proverbial that a question respecting any system, however well founded, may be asked in one line, which it may require pages to answer. To reply to a medley of such objections, one by one, is like the business of picking up pins. And even when the work is really done, the impression left is that made by an apology—according to the fine old maxim, "*Qui s'excuse s'accuse.*" Most of the popular objections are not in the least novel. A critical attack, peculiar in its character, has been made on Christianity in recent times in Germany by Strauss and Baur. It has been renewed in France in a modified form by Rénan. Materialism, either in a bald shape or in its agnostic dress, has made itself a prominent antagonist. But assailants of Christianity in American journals fre-



quently take up last-century weapons which have been cast aside by adversaries of the Gospel who are abreast of the times. To confute attacks of this sort, such as were common in the old Deistical controversy, would be to beat straw already well threshed. In truth, it is remarkable to notice how many of these objections were made by Celsus as early as the close of the second century, —for example, the objection from alleged discrepancies in the Gospels, —and were successfully disposed of by Origen, the great Christian scholar of that day.

I prefer a more positive method of handling the subject. As there is a variety of topics to be touched upon, it will be convenient to separate them by numerical designations.

1. Christianity is not a new thing. It is not contending for a foot-hold on the earth. Its roots are deep in the soil. It is a great, long-established, wide-spread, and still advancing religion. It is the faith of the enlightened nations, incorporated in them at the beginning of their existence, helping to create them, presiding over their growth. It has molded to a great extent their political and social institutions, their sentiments and usages, and leavened their literature and laws. It has entered into their very blood and marrow. To dislodge Christianity as a supernatural religion, were it possible, from the convictions and life of the European nations and their offshoots, would be a revolution the magnitude and terrible effect of which, as I believe, it is impossible to conceive. The old Græco-Roman religion fell, but it fell by the expulsive power of a new and better faith. Had it been swept away by mere unbelief, with nothing but atheism, or the indistinct and fluctuating creed of natural religion, to stand in the room of it, who can doubt that there would have been a ruin without a recovery? But the principal thing which I wish to say under this head is that the burden of disproving Christianity and demonstrating that it rests on a false foundation properly falls on the assailing party; and, further, to intimate that the task is not a light one.

2. It should be understood, at the outset, that no one claims that the system of Christianity is free from difficulties, which may, here and there, be of a perplexing character. This is no more than is admitted by everybody, except narrow partisans, in the case of every science. The same thing is true, I believe, of the law of gravitation. There are mysteries which are not cleared up, which Revelation does not pretend to clear

up; some, it is likely, which the human intelligence, at its present grade of development, is incapable of exploring. We are not yet arrived at the summit where we can overlook the universe. Christianity is a practical system; its founder likened himself to a physician. We are justified in taking food, and in taking medicine when we are sick, and this not merely on grounds of experience; we can see to some extent the *rationale* of the operation of food and medicine, even without an exhaustive knowledge of chemistry and physiology, and the hidden process of life and growth. An Apostle only claimed for himself and others to "know in part," to have a fragmentary and obscure knowledge—but still a real knowledge—of things invisible. The question respecting any creed proposed for belief, whether in religion, or philosophy, or science, is whether the reasons for it are stronger than the reasons against it, and whether they are enough stronger to justify credence. Christianity asks no more for itself than is conceded in regard to every other system and theory, and in regard generally to events which do not fall under the immediate notice of the senses—though even here time and space, sense-perception and the reality of an external world, are not free from the most perplexing difficulties.

Another thing which may as well be said here is, that Christians are not all agreed in their opinions, that it is unreasonable to expect them to concur on all points, and that it is unfair to identify the special ideas of a class with the essentials of Christian belief. What master in philosophy was ever interpreted just alike by all of his adherents? The disciples of Plato have differed as to his meaning on particular points. One of them has maintained one thing and another the opposite. Some have denied certain Dialogues to be his, which others with equal confidence have declared to be genuine. Yet, there is an essential Platonism in which, as a body, Platonic disciples are agreed. Where is there a political party which has existed for a score of years, the members of which are perfectly at one in their creed? How commonly do they disagree as to the meaning of their "platform," and this when there is no designed ambiguity in it! It would be too much to expect that on a subject like Christianity, covering, as it does, so broad a field, and as to the precise character of the Bible as a whole, and of its component parts, there should be an absolute accord among all who call them-

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selves, and deserve to be called, Christians. To take a single example: there are some who hold that everything that is said in the Scriptures which bears on natural and physical science is correct and of divine authority. There are others who hold that the Biblical writers, whatever they knew of the physical world, accommodated their language to the science of their time. Others, again, hold that in the Bible are positive errors in science, which, however, are affirmed not to militate against its authority as a teacher of moral and religious truth. These last are not to be denied the name of Christians; the fundamental principles of supernatural Christianity they may cherish with all their hearts. It is a blunder of ignorance, or a trick of controversy, to refuse to discriminate between what is essential to a system, and the diverse opinions, on points not essential, which spring up among its adherents. The line of demarkation it may not be so easy to draw; there may be a difference as to where exactly it should run, but the existence of such a line none but a sophistical reasoner will ignore.

3. Before proceeding farther, it is well to advert to an idea which I had formerly supposed was nearly extinct in the world,—the idea, namely, that religion, and the Christian religion in particular, is a bane. The Epicureans thought it an advantage to have deities which stood aloof from all concern for men or connection with human affairs. Lucretius wrote a poem to set forth the atomic theory of the universe, and thus to deliver men's minds from the terrors of superstition and all the gloom and torture of soul of which religion was the occasion. It cannot be denied that religion has been the occasion of incalculable suffering. Think of the uncounted victims of religious intolerance! Think of the animosity and bloodshed caused by religious wars! What an amount of misery arose out of the European wars of the seventeenth century, which had their origin largely in religious dissension! It seems a quick way to abolish these manifold calamities to abolish religion itself. Does it need to be said that there is another side to the picture? Apart from the fallacy of charging on a feeling or principle the consequences of its abuse or perversion, one should look at the comfort, wholesome restraint, uplifting hope, and all the other purifying, elevating, beneficial influences, incalculable in their extent, which have gone forth to the individual, to the household, to the state, and to mankind at large, from religion in its purer

forms. Moreover, one should look at the state of things which would ensue if religion, and the Christian religion, were swept away, and men were left to be born, and toil, and live, and die, "having no hope and without God in the world." This way of arguing against religion as baneful really contains an argument *for* religion. The evil that has sprung from fanaticism and other abuses of the religious sentiment shows how deeply planted religion is in the constitution of human nature, how powerful and ineradicable a feeling it is. In no other way can we account for its tremendous influence, when unenlightened or morbid, for evil. Why not go for getting rid of the nervous system on account of sciatica and neuralgia? Apply the same sort of reasoning which is used against religion to the passion of love as between the sexes. Who can measure the agony of which it has been the occasion—the corroding jealousies, the frantic rage, abiding rancor, adulteries, self-murder, sanguinary wars, from the siege of Troy for the capture of Helen to the connection of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and from the epoch of the Egyptian sorceress down to our day? Remembering Pascal's remark that if Cleopatra's nose had been longer or shorter, the course of history would have been changed, I am tempted to turn aside and show what unutterable woe would have been spared to mankind if "the fatal gift" of beauty had not been given to woman or to man. But, not to leave our illustration, if love had been absent, and the sensibilities and propensities involved in it, none can doubt that frightful sorrows would have been avoided. But then, among other things, we should have missed the family! To argue that religion is a curse is like contending that domestic life and human government are a curse. If the family had not existed, or were to be abolished, an unmeasured amount of petty tyranny, grinding toil, anguish at bereavement, would not have been, and would be no more. Then, as to human government, what is it but a long record of oppression? The cruel deeds of tyrants, of the Pharaohs, the Neroes, the Napoleons, the ravaging wars which rulers have instigated, the dynastic struggles,—were they all written down, the world would not contain the books. Yet, is human government a bane?

What is there bad in religion? Religion is love to God and men! What more is required by religion but "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"? (Micah vi. 8.)

This is religion even according to an Old Testament definition. Is this harmful to the individual who practices it? Is it hurtful to a neighborhood or to a civil community? Would it be bad for farmers, merchants, artisans, for young people or old people, or any other class? Are penitence for evil-doing, trust in a Heavenly Father who is more willing to bless than is an earthly parent, the conforming of one's life to the purest Example, in which righteousness and love are perfect and perfectly blended, mischievous? Is it mischievous to resist temptation and to pray to God for help in the conflict, and for aid in becoming unselfish? Yet these are essential ingredients in practical Christianity, and Christianity has nothing in it incompatible with them, but everything else in Christianity is auxiliary to them.

I must confess myself amazed that any rational person can read history with the least attention and fail to see the beneficent influence of the Christian religion. To vindicate Christianity in this particular appears very like pronouncing a eulogy upon the sun in answer to the assertion that there was light—"cosmic light"—in the world before the sun first rose in the heavens, and in order to rebut the complaint that the sun has been sometimes clouded, and gives us, not unfrequently, dull and murky days. What was the world into which Christianity entered? Tribes and nations had been distinct, each of them shut up in its own boundaries, and going forth only to make war on its neighbors. Then all were subdued, and reduced under the hard domination of one city. Liberty—such as had existed in Greek towns where there was a little fraction of freemen to a multitude of slaves, and in Rome within the oligarchy which ruled it—had disappeared. As concerns morality, Roman slavery, the slavery of whites,—of artists, teachers, and authors, as well as of peasants,—which was bad enough under the Republic, grew worse after its fall; gladiatorial combats, where all classes of people applauded the butchery of men by thousands in the arena; infanticide, countenanced by philosophers and statesmen; the foulest sorts of pollution, to which modern society is a stranger,—these are some of the features of social life at that epoch. The picture of ancient morals and manners has been sometimes drawn in colors too black, and without due discrimination; but when faithfully drawn it justifies the condemnation which the Apostle Paul pours upon it, in the introduction of his Letter to



the Roman Church.\* There were noble men in antiquity, and there were virtuous women. But when one hears laudations of ancient morals, as if there was a state of things to be compared for a moment with the pure atmosphere of Christian society, one can hardly avoid reminding the authors of such false and ignorant comparisons that the noblest man of all the ancients went with his disciples to visit a prostitute, not to advise her "to sin no more," but to talk on the question how to ply her occupation with most profit.† Considering what Greek life was, Socrates deserves no severe reproach. But this verdict in his favor condemns the society where even the best of its members knew no better.

Neither Socrates nor Plato rose above the Greek prejudice against "the barbarian." There came, indeed, at length, a dawning sense of a humanity not limited by barriers of nation and race. Yet utterances of this nature are heard chiefly from the Stoic sect—a sect which purchased tranquillity at the cost of sympathy, and, by smothering emotion, indulged in compassion only in contradiction to its own fundamental tenets, and preached fatalism and the drifting of all things to destruction as the best gospel it could discover. If Terence wrote a line in praise of humane feeling, Plautus declared that "Man is a wolf to the stranger,"—"Homo homini ignoto lupus est." The only Roman writer who expresses a disapproval of gladiatorial fights is Seneca, and he only in his old age, after he had implied in earlier writings a contrary view. Even the younger Pliny applauds the provisions made by a private person, as well as by Trajan, for these bloody amusements.‡

Charity, compassionate love, says Boeckh, one of the profoundest classical scholars of the present age, was no virtue of the ancient world. Kindly sayings can be met with, as blossoms are found on the high Alps in the midst of the snow. There are instances of philanthropy in something approaching to a systematic form. But it takes more than one swallow to make a spring. The few examples of benevolence on a broad scale, which are often referred to, are generally more apparent than

\* I have endeavored to describe the morals of heathen society in "The Beginnings of Christianity," ch. vi.

† Xenophon, "Memorabilia," II., xi.

‡ See Friedländer's comments on Cicero's view, etc., in the "Sittengesch. Roms," I., 242, 243; and Göll, "Hellas u. Rom," 158, 159.

real. The provision for poor children and for orphans, begun by Nerva and carried out by Trajan, was for the increase of the free population—just as Augustus had offered a bounty on marriage. The number of boys supported was ten times that of girls, which indicates that female children were in large numbers abandoned, either to perish or to be saved from death for a worse lot. Children deserted by their parents were reared by a special class of slave-dealers, in order to sell them as slaves.\* Measures which were founded on policy—as much so as the feeding of the idle populace of Rome out of the public granary—are not to be construed into evidences of benevolence. The motive of the benefaction of Trajan is shown in the fact that it made no provision for children thus abandoned to perish. The same “mild” Trajan,—and he *was* mild in comparison with many of the emperors,—after his victories on the Danube, put ten thousand men into the arena, who continued for four months to soak the sand with their blood.† The truth is that among the Jews alone the spirit of fraternity and charity prevailed. The Jew alone left in his field the sheaf of grain for the gleaner, and in the vineyard the bunch of grapes for the needy. Aristotle and Plato were the philosophers of widest-repute. Aristotle defends slavery on the ground that the slave is an animated tool. Plato discountenances an interest in the poor when they are sick. The laboring man who cannot recover, the physician is to abandon, or to experiment on. In all antiquity, the individual was merged in the state. When the states of antiquity fell, the Stoic dreamed of a cosmopolitan state; but it remained a dream.

Christianity came into the world with a new commandment, “to love one another.” It brought in the principle of the brotherhood of man. It broke down the barriers of country and clan. It gathered the Greek and barbarian, the rich and the poor, the freeman and the slave, about the Lord’s table, where all differences were merged in a fraternal unity. The Christian churches were eleemosynary societies. They dispensed alms with an open hand to their own poor, and to the needy about them. There had been sodalities for mutual benefit—mutual insurance clubs. But such beneficence and self-sacrifice as Christians showed, were something altogether new in the world. The indigent, the oppressed, the desponding invalid, the

\* See Merivale, “History of the Romans,” vii., 208, 209.

† Dio, LXVIII., 15.

toiling slave, took heart and hope. There was sympathy for them here on earth, and a bright hope beyond death.

Christianity survived persecution. It was stronger than Rome, stronger than pagan fanaticism. It displaced the old religion. Amidst the decay of all to which the hearts of men had clung, Christianity remained the sole stay and hope of a falling world. The Church turned to the Germanic nations, carried to them the Gospel, reduced their languages to writing, gave them the Bible and a literature, civilized them, conveyed to them such learning and such of the arts of life as had outlived the tides of barbarian invasion. The oldest writings in the Teutonic tongues are the fragments of the Gothic translation of the Bible by Ulflas. As he gave letters to the Goths, another missionary, Cyril, did the same service for the Slavonic peoples. Anglo-Saxon literature, with English civilization, grew up among our fierce barbarian ancestors through their conversion by Augustine, and the connection into which they were brought with the converted nations of the Continent. It is very doubtful whether the individuals of our Teutonic race who attack the Christian religion would know their letters, or would be possessed of any vehicle for expressing their ideas except in an oral form, had it not been for the heroic missionaries of that religion which is thought to be so deleterious in its influence. In Christian monasteries the remains of ancient literature were preserved; by Christian monks barbarians were taught agriculture and whatever knowledge was left from the general wreck. From schools founded by British missionaries, and by Charlemagne (who was taught his letters by an English clergyman), the universities of Europe afterward arose. In the partial corruption of the Church, the Scriptures had still been preserved; the truth of the Gospel had not been quenched. When the Bible was opened, out of the bosom of the Church came a great Reformation. Religion in its purified form manifested its immortal power in the individual and for the renovation of society. From the awakening of the souls of men to a truer sense of their relations to God and to Christ, resulted in modern times the demand for political liberty and for institutions more conformed to justice. The struggle for English freedom ensued, and the events which paved the way for the American Republic.

I have not space to pursue this topic. The eccentric thesis that religion—that the Christian Religion as it is set forth in the

New Testament—is a curse, may be tested in a practical way. Let any one imagine the best and most faithful Christian, measured by the New Testament standard, whom he knows, to be deprived of his religion altogether, or even of such elements in it as are the exclusive result of the Gospel, and then let him ask himself if his manhood would be improved by the change, and if his influence in the aggregate would be for the better. Then let the same person imagine the entire community to be stripped of the churches, hospitals, schools, the customs of private prayer and household religious teaching,—stripped, in a word, of all the beliefs, habits, feelings, institutions, laws, so far as their origin is due to the Gospel of Christ as taught in the New Testament, and then let him inquire of himself whether the change would be salutary, or whether, in case the Gospel had not borne these fruits, anything else equally desirable would have grown up in the room of them. Let him make up the account, putting in the column opposite to the benefits of Christianity whatever of evil he thinks has come from it, or would have been prevented without it. Let him make the calculation for himself, and render an honest verdict.

4. What is Christianity? It is composed of facts and doctrines, two elements which I shall severally consider hereafter. Christians believe in the supernatural mission of Jesus, in His divine sonship, in the authority of His teaching and of the teaching of His Apostles, in His spotless excellence, in His miracles, in His death and resurrection. They believe that God has established a kingdom in the world, a spiritual kingdom, the beginnings of which were laid in the remote past; that it began in the separation of one man, Abraham, from the surrounding idolatry, and in the segregation from idolatrous peoples of the nation which sprang from him; that this kingdom, founded and sustained by a supernatural Providence, was carried from stage to stage until its consummation, or its attaining to a ripe and universal form, through Jesus Christ; that within this kingdom true religion was planted and nourished until it arrived at perfection in the final or Christian stage of revelation, when it only remained to diffuse it over the earth; that to this outcome the whole system, even in its rudimental shape, looked and tended; and that Christianity was the object of prediction, sometimes dim, sometimes more clear; that the manifestation of God was primarily in act and deed, or in a succession of historical events

in which the divine agency was evidently concerned, and which served, therefore, to reveal God and to bring men into communion with Him; that for the understanding of the significance of these transactions the minds of prophets and apostles were supernaturally enlightened, whereby they were qualified to be the expositors of the outward revelation and to enforce its lessons.

A distinction must be made between revelation and inspiration, and between Christianity and the Bible. He is the recipient of a revelation to whom insight into truth is supernaturally communicated. The same man may, or may not, be inspired to set forth the contents of that revelation, either orally or in a writing. But Christianity existed and was complete, and it was preached, before a syllable of the New Testament was written. Christians hold to the obvious historical fact that the old dispensation stands in an organic relation to the new. Christianity sprang up among the Jews. If science is from the Greeks, and law is from the Romans, "salvation is of the Jews." Religion was the one absorbing idea and interest of that people as it never has been of any other. The Son of Man is the Son of David. But a great part of the Bible is made up of narratives. How far were the writers aided from above in the composition of them, and how far did they depend on observations and inquiries like those through which writers of secular history, into which the miraculous element does not enter, gain their information? No one holds that history was to any considerable extent dictated to them. Some Christians hold that inspiration guided their minds in the selection and omission of matter. Some hold that inspiration protected them from all sorts of error, even such imperfections as the most accurate and faithful narrators are liable to fall into. Others dissent from this last view. But Christians generally consider these historical books of the Old and New Testaments, and all the other books of the Bible, to be differentiated from all other literature, as being pervaded by another spirit, which is due to the fact that they are produced on the plane of Revelation, and stand in a peculiar relation to the supernatural events which form its groundwork. The books of the Bible are the documents of the Christian religion, from which its facts and doctrines, and the circumstances of its origin and growth, can be correctly ascertained. Deviations from traditional theories of inspiration may be erroneous, or they may be well founded, but no man who accepts the essential truths of Christianity is to be



denied the title of Christian on the ground of peculiarities of opinion on this subject.

5. The foregoing remarks naturally bring us to the important fact of the Gradualness of Divine Revelation. Like the subsequent spread of the Gospel, it was "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." This inchoate, preparatory, and, in this sense, imperfect character is ascribed to the Old Testament system, both in the Old Testament itself and in the New. The whole form of the kingdom of God in the earlier dispensation was provisional; the disclosure of God was partial and increasing; laws fell short of the absolute standard of moral duty; rites were adapted to religious feelings and to perceptions not yet mature; the type of character corresponded to the inadequate conceptions of God; the ethical and emotional expressions answered to the several stages of Revelation to which they pertained. All this ought to be as familiar to readers of the Bible as the alphabet. Unhappily, it has been often overlooked by Christians, and persistently ignored by adversaries of Christianity.

Christ contrasted his precepts with the injunctions given to them of old time. He taught that sin and not sinners was to be the object of abhorrence. The boundaries of love and goodwill were to be co-extensive with the race of mankind. Men were to pray for their enemies. Referring to an important precept in the Mosaic legislation, that relating to divorce, he said that it was given on account of "the hardness" of men's hearts; that is, their rude, uncivilized condition, and their moral obtuseness (Matt. xix. 8). The Mosaic law required a man who wished to be rid of his wife, to give her a written testimony which should protect her—when all women separate from a family were cast-aways—and enable her to contract marriage with another man. This was a limit to the husband's arbitrary prerogative, ■ restraint put upon him, and so far an approach to the full recognition of her marital rights, and of the sacred character of the marriage-tie. It was a step in the right direction, and as long a step, considering the state of society then existing, as could be taken. To attempt more would have been to rush into *doctrinaire* legislation of the most impracticable character. To complain of this old divorce law, one of the various enactments by which the Hebrew wife and the Hebrew family finally attained to a position which they held in no heathen nation, and

by which safeguards were set around the purity of the household—to complain of this law is as illogical as it is for advocates of temperance to pronounce every license law immoral, when if the law were called restrictive (as it might be), the whole force of their objection would vanish. It is not less unreasonable than it would be to complain of the civil law at present, because, while it prohibits and punishes certain forms of slander, it publishes no statute for the detection and punishment of gossip and petty defamation; as if the forbidding of one offense involved an approval of the other.

Now an application of the fact of the Gradualness and Partialness of Revelation will remove most, if not all, of the moral difficulties which are raised with regard to the Old Testament. Whoever discerns distinctly this fact—which is a perfectly manifest fact—will have gained a point of view where the major part of these difficulties disappear of themselves. Without this historical sense, without a sympathetic appreciation of the condition of mankind in the far-distant ages when the movement of Revelation began, the old dispensation and the Old Testament can never be understood. Those who have no dislike for the New Testament, but have only hard words for the Old, who can honor the Heavenly Father of whom Christ speaks, but find the Jehovah of the Law and the Prophets repulsive, may be compared to one who relishes a ripe and juicy peach, but has no patience with the rough and bitter peach-stone from which the tree sprang.

The benign tendencies and effect of the institutions and laws of the Old Testament, when compared with the legislation of all other ancient nations, have been often demonstrated. One of the most lucid discussions of the subject, in a brief compass, is that of Professor Goldwin Smith, in his tract entitled “Does the Bible sanction American slavery?” He justly characterizes the Old Testament legislation as “a Code of Laws the beneficence of which is equally unapproached by any code, and least of all by any Oriental code, not produced under the influence of Christianity.” The purpose was not to transform society by a miracle. That is not the method of God. The Jewish code brought in no barbarous institution or custom. Its aim and result is to reform, mitigate, and finally abolish evil usages already existing. Take the laws respecting the Avenger of Blood. This wild kind of justice is well-nigh universal among primitive tribes. The Old Testament did not attempt to abolish it at a stroke, but laid upon

it useful restrictions. The Avenger could punish no sort of homicide but willful murder; no money was to be taken in satisfaction for blood; hereditary feuds were forbidden; judges were provided in all the tribes to arbitrate between the slayer and Avenger.\* Thus, a reign of law was introduced which in time must supplant, and actually did supplant, private vengeance. Take the laws relative to the right of Asylum, another ancient institution existing among the Greeks and Romans, and prominent in the Middle Ages among the semi-civilized European nations. In old times it was a beneficent check upon lawless violence. It furnished safe retreats for the unprotected; but gross abuses always arose in connection with it. Superstitions about sacred places and the immunity of criminals were connected with it. The Mosaic law recognized the custom. It established six cities of refuge. But these were not for the willful murderer. He was to be dragged from the altar.† The cities were not to be holy places. They were for the shelter of the sojourner as well as of the Jew. The fugitive was not compelled to stay in them forever; he might leave the asylum with impunity on the death of the High Priest.‡ Look at the laws respecting paternal authority. In patriarchal society the rule of the father was supreme and absolute. It continued to be an unqualified despotism among the Romans. A Roman father had the legal right to take the lives of his wife and children. As late as the time of Seneca, Erixon, a Roman knight, put his son to death. Under the Mosaic law, a mother must concur with the father in an accusation against a rebellious son. There must be a charge before "the elders,"—a solemn public proceeding.§ Polygamy prevailed in primitive times. A woman disconnected from a family was the most forlorn of beings. She was a miserable outcast. The Mosaic law did not abolish polygamy, but it alleviated its evils. If one wife was hated and another favored, still the first-born child, if it was "hers that was hated," should inherit a double portion.|| It may be here remarked that woman among the Hebrews was never degraded as in most Oriental countries. In the decalogue, adultery and the coveting of a neighbor's wife or maid-servant were prohibited. Crimes against the purity of matron or maid were rigorously punished. Among the leaders

\* Numb. xxxv., Deut. xxiv. 16.

† Numb. xxxv. 26-28.

‡ Ex. xxi. 14.

§ Deut. xxi. 18-22.

|| Deut. xxi. 15-17.

celebrated in Hebrew story were such as Miriam and Deborah. Millenniums before the discussions of our day upon the emancipation of women, Deborah was a judge in Israel. The description of a virtuous housewife in the Proverbs\*—the woman “in whom the heart of her husband doth safely trust”—exhibits the Hebrew ideal of the wife and mother. Inhuman as the rules of war were among the ancient Hebrews, the Mosaic legislation on this subject was for that day humane. The opportunity was to be given to a besieged city to surrender and to become tributary. The inhabitants had the option of saving their lives.† The Hebrews were forbidden to do, as the Greeks did,—cut down the fruit-trees in a district which they invaded. If an attractive female was captured, she might be taken to wife, and then must be treated as a wife; but it was forbidden “to sell her at all for money.”‡ Whoever has read Homer, or studied the Assyrian and Babylonian monuments, or even read the history of the Thirty Years’ War, may be safely trusted to pronounce a judgment on the spirit and tendency of this legislation. The Jews were forced to fight in self-defense, surrounded as they were by powerful and aggressive nations. But they did not become a warlike people. War was never the great occupation; military distinction never counted for so much as was the case in other nations; and there were checks upon enforced military service, as remarkable as they were beneficent.

Professor Goldwin Smith has just observations respecting monarchy among the Hebrews. Their leaders recognized the advantages of a free commonwealth, and felt it to be more consonant with their idea and function as a people. But when the people—being what they were—preferred monarchy, monarchy was allowed. But the Hebrew kings were not Oriental despots. They reigned by consent of the people. There were laws which set a limit to their prerogatives. There were fearless prophets to rebuke and denounce the proudest of them. The right of revolution was maintained. No such man as Nebuchadnezzar would have been endured by the Hebrew people.

Respecting Hebrew worship, Professor Goldwin Smith remarks:

“All the nations worshipped God by sacrifice and through outward forms till the mind of man had been raised high enough to worship in spirit and in

\* Prov. xxxi. 10–31.

† Deut. xx. 10; Deut. xx. 19, 20.

‡ Deut. xxi. 10.

truth. The Hebrew lawgiver did not originate sacrificial rites, but he elevated and purified them, and guarded them against the most horrible aberrations as to the nature of God and the mode of winning his favor and averting his wrath, as all who know the history of heathen sacrifices, Eastern or Western, must perceive. The scape-goat has been and is a subject of much mockery to philosophers. Moses did not introduce that symbolic way of relieving the souls of a people from the burden of sin and assuring them of the mercy of God; but he took care that the scape-goat should be a *goat*, and not, as at polished Athens and civilized Rome, a *man*."

The Levites were not a sacerdotal caste. They were set apart for service in the ritual by the laying on of the hands of "the children of Israel," who were gathered in an assembly for the purpose. The right to teach was not confined to the priestly class. The prophet held a more exalted station than the priest, and one might be called, like Amos, to the prophetic office, whose occupation had been to tend sheep.

Slavery has existed among all, or nearly all, uncivilized nations. It was universal among the peoples of antiquity. The lives of the inhabitants of a conquered place were forfeited by the laws of war. They might, at the option of the captor, be reduced to slavery. Patriarchal slavery, as it is depicted in the Bible, was the mildest form of servitude. It was domestic slavery; the servant was one of the family, was a companion of the master, was brought into religious fellowship with him, and, like a feudal vassal, was armed in his defense. Slavery, as regulated by the Mosaic enactments, when compared with slavery as defined and practiced under Roman law, or even among modern nations, was a humane institution. A Hebrew might become a slave voluntarily, on account of poverty, or he might be reduced to slavery as a penalty for theft. But his servitude was terminable by the satisfaction of just claims upon him, or by the recurrence of the year of jubilee, which emancipated all slaves of Hebrew extraction; and, in any event, by the expiration of six years from the time when he became a slave. His master was enjoined to treat him not as "a bond-servant," but as "an hired-servant," and "not to rule over him with rigor." When his servitude came to an end, his master was forbidden "to let him go away empty."\* With regard to marriage, a master might give to a Hebrew slave a non-Hebrew wife, herself a slave, for the time of his servitude, but she and her children remained with the master—a provision which, however harsh it may appear to

\* Ex. xxi. 2, *seq.*; Deut. xv. 12-15.



us, was not harsh when compared with the ordinary codes and customs of slavery. A father might, for money, dispose of his daughter; but this was with a view to her marriage, and was one branch of the *patria potestas*, the paternal prerogative. The purchase-money might be looked upon somewhat in the light of a dowry. Enactments were carefully made for her protection in case she did not become a wife of the one to whom she was given, or of his son.\* As regards non-Hebrew slaves, they might be manumitted. There were regulations for their protection and comfort, such as no other ancient nation framed. The willful murder of a slave was visited with the same penalty as the murder of a freeman. A serious injury, such as the loss of an eye or a tooth, was to be recompensed by giving the slave his liberty. Kidnapping, and the surrender of fugitive slaves flying from a heathen master, were punished. The general treatment of slaves under the Old Testament law was gentle. The Hebrew is most emphatically commanded to be kind to the stranger and not to maltreat or oppress him. "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." "For the Lord your God is a God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye, therefore, the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." The slave, like his master, did no work one day in seven. He partook with the family in the most solemn acts of public worship. He even took part in the family festival of the Passover. There was no policy looking to the multiplying of slaves. There were no slave markets. Israel was never a "slave-power," as were Athens, Rome, and other ancient states.

We may pause for a moment to advert to the attitude of Christianity toward slavery. If Christianity had made war directly on the constitution of society, had undertaken to reduce the government of Nero to a moderate and legitimate exercise of authority, had attempted to define the distinction between just service and unjust servitude,—if Christianity had attempted these things, it would have had a short stay in the world. What did the Apostles do? They inculcated the golden rule. They

\* Ex. xxi. 7-10.

insisted on the equality of men before God. They enjoined the exercise of justice and love. They taught that both master and slave had a Master in common, to whom both were answerable. They counseled slaves not to resist even harsh masters, but to bear their sufferings with patience and fortitude. They bade masters render to their bond-servants that which is just and equal. Paul sent back Onesimus to Philemon, no longer as a servant, but as a brother beloved. In a word, Christian Ethics, or the bearings of the Law of Love on social relations, were not developed in all their ramifications in a moment. They were left to be brought gradually to the consciousness of Christian men, and thus to be intelligently and peacefully realized in social organization. If Christianity did not abolish slavery by an instantaneous decree, which would have been only a *brutum fulmen*, it put gunpowder under the system. For it was the influence of the Gospel which eventually abolished slavery in the Roman Empire and serfdom in the Middle Ages; and it is the direct and indirect influence of Christianity which has abolished modern slavery, notwithstanding the defense of it by undiscerning or interested clergymen and churches.

We return to the Old Testament. There was one thing which the Hebrews were to regard with unsparing hatred. This was idolatry. They were the Chosen People. They were chosen to be the recipients of a revelation; to form a community in which the only living and true God should be alone worshiped; through which Monotheism should be planted on the earth, and a priceless gift be prepared for all nations.

What shall be said of the extermination of the Canaanites? The moral questions involved in this topic are so grave and momentous that, if it were to be discussed adequately, a large space would be requisite for their full treatment. But I venture upon a few observations.

In the first place, what reason is alleged for the driving out of these tribes, and for destroying them, root and branch? One reason was their unexampled vileness and impurity. Another reason was the contamination which would make association with them the ruin of the Israelites. These old Canaanite tribes were steeped in a worse than brutal sensuality. The foulest incest was not the extreme point of their pollution. With this bestiality was joined a cruelty which made human sacrifices, the flinging of children alive into the flames to appease their gods, congenial to

them.\* Many of them fled to Tyre and other Phenician towns. From what we know of Carthage, which was settled by Canaanite worshipers of Baal and Ashtaroth, we can get an idea of the savage rites of their idolatry. In the flourishing days of that city, hundreds of innocent boys, belonging to the best families, were thrown into the fire as a sacrifice to Moloch, the "horrid king" of the old Canaanite religion. "The land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth forth its inhabitants."† The Israelites were warned not to follow the course of the Canaanites, "That the land spew not you out, also, as it spewed out the nations that were before you." These degraded tribes were to be rooted out, "That they teach you not to do after all these abominations, which they have done unto their gods."‡

In the second place, that the Israelites, animated with faith in the true God, taught to detest the unspeakable wickedness of the Canaanite tribes, considered themselves intrusted with a mission to execute God's judgment upon them, to drive them out and destroy them, and to make room for that true religion of which they were the exclusive representatives on earth, is an historical fact. When they saw afterward the mischief that resulted from the influence of the remnant of the Canaanites that were left, they were confirmed in the conviction that their destruction was the just ordinance of God. They felt that a sacred obligation rested on them to sweep the ground clean.

In the third place, the beneficent results of Revealed Religion, the benefits which have gone forth to mankind, and appear in the Christian civilization of to day, were contingent, as far as we can judge, on the extermination of these tribes. I shall quote here from two accomplished historical scholars, neither of whom can be accused of a lack of humane feeling, and neither of whom is wedded to traditional theological beliefs. Professor Goldwin Smith remarks on this topic of "the penal destruction of the Canaanites":

"Had they been spared, and reduced to slavery, the result, judging from analogy, would have been the deep corruption of the Chosen People. With abundance of slave-labor, the Jews would not have taken to industry, nor have acquired the virtues which industry alone can produce and guard. Their fate would have been like that of the Turks and other conquering hordes of the East, which, the rush of conquest once over, have sunk into mere sloth and abject sensuality. And if the morals of the Canaanites are truly painted in the Pentateuch, the possession of such slaves would have been depraving in the highest degree."

\* See Levit. xviii.

† Lev. xviii. 25.

‡ Deut. xx. 18.

More emphatic still are the words of Dr. Arnold :

"It is better that the wicked should be destroyed a hundred times over than that they should tempt those who are as yet innocent to join their company. Let us but think what might have been our fate, and the fate of every nation under heaven at this hour, had the sword of the Israelites done its work more sparingly. Even as it was, the small portions of the Canaanites who were left, and the nations around them, so tempted the Israelites by their idolatrous practices, that we read continually of the whole people of God turning away from his service. But had the heathen lived in the land in equal numbers, and still more, had they intermarried largely with the Israelites, how was it possible, humanly speaking, that any sparks of the light of God's truth should have survived to the coming of Christ? Would not the Israelites have lost all their peculiar character? And if they had retained the name of Jehovah as of their God, would they not have formed as unworthy notions of his attributes, and worshipped him with a worship as abominable, as that which the Moabites paid to Chemosh, or the Philistines to Dagon?

"But this was not to be, and therefore the nations of Canaan were to be cut off utterly. The Israelites' sword, in its bloodiest executions, wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. They seem of very small importance to us now, those perpetual contests with the Canaanites, and the Midianites, and the Ammonites, and the Philistines, with which the Books of Joshua, and Judges, and Samuel are almost filled. We may half wonder that God should have interfered in such quarrels, or have changed the course of nature, in order to give one of these nations of Palestine the victory over another. But in these contests, on the fate of one of these nations of Palestine the happiness of the human race depended. The Israelites fought not for themselves only, but for us. It might follow that they should thus be accounted the enemies of all mankind,—it might be that they were tempted by their very distinctness to despise other nations; still they did God's work,—still they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it." \*

It is pertinent to remind the reader that acts occurring in recent times resembling the destruction of the Canaanites have been approved, whether justly or not, by writers of high repute. Of the massacre by Cromwell at the siege of Drogheda, Carlyle says:

"Oliver's proceedings have been the theme of much loud criticism and sibylline execration, into which it is not our plan to enter at present. Terrible surgery this; but *is* it surgery and judgment, or atrocious murder merely? That is a question which should be asked, or answered. Oliver Cromwell did believe in God's judgments; and did not believe in the rose-water plan of surgery;—which in fact is this editor's case too." . . . "An armed soldier solemnly conscious to himself that he is the soldier of God the Just,—a consciousness which it well beseems all soldiers and all men to have always,

\* Quoted by Stanley, "History of the Jewish Church," I., 283.

—armed soldier, terrible as Death, relentless as Doom; doing God's judgments on the enemies of God! It is a phenomenon not of a joyful nature; no, but of awful, to be looked at with pious terror and awe."

In the fourth place, as far as the effect upon the Israelites of this war of extermination is concerned, there was no wounding of sensibility. There was no such departure from the prevalent ideas and the prevalent usages of war, as would produce a moral deterioration in the Israelites themselves. Rather is it true, that feeling themselves the deputies of the Supreme God for the infliction of righteous penalties, and for carrying out His purpose, they would perform their stern task with a kind of sacred enthusiasm, distinct from personal revenge and malice, and impressed at every step with their own exposure to a like retribution in case they should fall back into the pollutions of heathenism. An act which, though enjoined by just authority, and in its ultimate results beneficent, it might not have been possible for a people on a higher stage of moral development to perform without a hardening effect on themselves, the Israelites could do with no such consequence flowing from it.

As to the Canaanites themselves, they endured a retribution which has often been inflicted, in the ordinary course of Providence, on corrupt and enervated races, going down before the power of a more vigorous invading people. In the case before us, the Supreme Ruler employed human instruments directly designated, and, therefore, justly empowered, for the purpose. Yet, on this view, it may still be said with truth that the injunction to drive out the barbarian tribes took the form that it did on account of "the hardness of their hearts." Had they been more susceptible to gentler motives, less inclined themselves to sink into debasing idolatry, and had their moral sense been capable of discriminations which Christianity has made familiar, the mission given to them might have been different. It might then have been as safe for Israelites to mingle with the heathen as it was in later ages, when no seductions and no terrors could move them to take part in idolatry.

I am not satisfied that the foregoing remarks do not embrace the elements of a fair solution of the problem presented by this page of the sacred history. But if any think that this solution, in the light of the Gospel, by which everything is to be judged, is insufficient, the alternative remains to consider—not the abhorrence of idolatry, not the disposition to put far from them



its orgies and pollutions—but the connected impulse to destroy and exterminate which those feelings engendered, as not inspired of God, but as a natural impulse and emotion on that stage of moral discernment which, on the one hand, was elevated above the obtuseness of conscience out of which they had been lifted by the light of Revelation, and on the other hand, was not so far elevated above it as to enable them to think of other means of attaining the desired end. On this theory another view must be taken respecting the inspiration of these passages in the record. They must be considered as reflecting the judgment of the men of “the old time” respecting the deed of the Israelites. That deed must be held to have sprung, not from an explicit injunction, but from the dictate of a holy, yet imperfectly holy, sentiment. The espousal of this view, however, does not deprive a man of the title of Christian. Whether true or false, it can be held consistently with the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. This belief it is which makes a man a Christian.\*

To sum up what I have to say here upon the Old Testament system. It was a national religion. Without a stupendous and continuous miracle, in no other way could the true religion get a foot-hold on the earth. But miracle is not magic. At that time all religions were tribal. The Hebrews were organized by the act of God into a theocratic community. He assumed toward them the relation of a lawgiver. His legislation, given through prophets, extended over all matters of which government was expected to take cognizance. Idolatry was weeded out by express enactments. Apostasy from God was at once impiety and treason. Penalties were inflicted upon overt irreligion, not through the agency of natural law only, as on the broad field of the world, but through civil law, which was acknowledged to emanate directly from God. The uncivilized instincts of men were more and more curbed by wholesome enactments adapted to their condition. Increasing disclosures of the character of God purified the popular conception of Him. As Revelation advanced, the standard of piety and morality rose to a higher grade. Holiness came to be a word full of the most sacred meaning. Conscience was disciplined. Aspirations for a nearer access to God, for a wider reign of God, were awakened. A more full Revelation was an-

\* Matt. xvi. 16-18. John iv. 42, vi. 69.

ticipated in the dim future. To the future the longing eyes of men were turned. At length the day came for the true religion to burst through the bonds of its political form and its external ritual. The true King, the hope of prophecy, appeared, not as the head of a single commonwealth, but as the Lord and Redeemer of Mankind. Theocracy reached the ideal to which it had pointed, and toward which it had striven, from the beginning.

6. In presenting the evidences of Christianity, the facts are first to be established. The facts which are principally called in question are the miracles recorded in the Gospels. An atheist cannot credit the narrative of a miracle, for he knows of no power competent to perform one. A deist who believes in an idle deity who lets the world go on of itself, and takes little interest in the well-being of men, will distrust all testimony to miracles, be it as cogent as testimony ever can be. But a theist, whose God is a benevolent Being and pities human distress, even the distress of those who have willfully forsaken Him, will regard a Revelation as not improbable, and miracles, a part and evidence of it, as not unlikely to occur.

Without considering, for the present, questions relating to the authorship and date of the Gospels, it is affirmed to be impossible to account for the beginnings of Christianity, and for facts which every sensible person admits respecting Christ, his teaching, and the foundation of the Church, without allowing that miracles such as are narrated in the Gospels, including His resurrection, were actually wrought. The known fact—a fact attested by the Apostle Paul,\* an unimpeachable witness—that the Apostles themselves professed to work miracles by a power derived from Christ, makes it highly probable that they believed miracles to have been wrought by him. What made them believe this, if they had not seen them? Repeated injunctions of Christ not to report his miracles are an obviously authentic part of the Gospel history; and this proves that the events to which these injunctions refer actually took place. Cautions, plainly authentic, proceeding from him, addressed to his disciples, against making too much of miracles, are a proof that they were actually wrought. There is teaching of Christ, the authenticity of which cannot reasonably be disputed, which is meaningless unless certain miracles were the occasion of it. An example is the message sent to John the Baptist, when he inquired if Jesus were really

\* Gal. iii. 4; II. Cor. xii. 12.

the Christ (Matt. xi. 4, Luke vii. 22). Other examples are conversations of Jesus with over-rigid observers of the Sabbath; they complained that he had healed the sick on that holy day. His answer on one occasion (Luke xiv. 5) implies that the healing was of a desperate malady. The charge that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub proves that he restored demoniacs, like the madman of Gadara, to reason and health. The resort to this imputation proves that the cures of this kind which he wrought were not parallel with any exorcisms with which the Jews were familiar. The fact that not a miracle is attributed to John the Baptist should convince one that the miracles attributed to Jesus were really done. John was considered by the Apostles inferior to none of the prophets. Why are not marvelous works connected with the accounts of him? Why are no miracles ascribed to Jesus himself, before his public ministry? The later, apocryphal Gospels do this; but not the Gospels of the canon. It is impossible to explain the faith of Jesus in himself as the Messiah, or the persevering faith of the disciples in him, if he wrought no miracles. Strauss called the miracles myths, growing out of the fixed expectation that the Messiah, when he should come, would do such works. How, then, could they consider Jesus the Messiah, if he did not do them? To one who studies the Gospel history, it is plain that miracles enter into the nexus of well-attested occurrences, and cannot be dissected out of it. The crowning miracle of Christianity—the resurrection of Jesus—is supported by proof which cannot be invalidated. Everybody who knows anything about the subject will concede that the unanimous faith of the Apostles in the resurrection, as having occurred the third day after his death, is the cause of the continued existence of Christianity beyond that date. Whether Christianity should survive or perish turned on that pivot. To explain that belief of the Apostles, for which they were ready to lay down their lives,—that inspiring belief which raised them from the depths of despondency, and transformed them from timid fugitives to courageous heralds, going forth to confront and conquer all opposition,—to explain this belief, if it was not founded on fact, is a tough problem for skepticism to solve. The Apostle Paul, who was converted in the year 35, about five years after the crucifixion; who, three years later, spent a fortnight with Peter at Jerusalem; \* who was conversant at the time with the tes-

\* Gal. i. 18.

timony given by the Apostles, presents in detail the successive manifestations of Jesus to them and to the other disciples; in one instance, to five hundred at once.\* These interviews were a definite number; they began at a certain time, they ceased altogether at a certain time. This circumstance, taken in connection with all the other phenomena which no candid skeptic will deny to have entered into the testimony of the Apostles on this subject, excludes the theory of hallucination. Moreover, the psychological conditions which it would be necessary to assume in order to render self-delusion possible on their part were wholly wanting. They were mourning as for a lost cause. Nothing but an objective event of the most impressive character could have revived their spirit, and produced that revulsion of feeling out of which the whole subsequent history of the Christian religion sprang.†

An objection to the credibility of the Gospel miracles is often drawn from the fabulous miracles which abound in the records of pagan antiquity, and in the legends of the saints. The objection is plausible, but it is fallacious in logic, and is based on a superficial resemblance. The miracles of the Gospel are for a higher end; they are for the purpose of revelation. They mark the opening epochs in the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. For the diffusion of that kingdom they are not required. Again, the miracles of the Gospel were not wrought in coincidence with a prevailing system, and for the furtherance of it; they had not the enthusiasm of believers, and their already established faith behind them. *They created that faith, they kindled that enthusiasm.* This is a most significant difference. Moreover, the temptations to fraud in the case of ecclesiastical miracles are such as had no place when Christianity was first introduced by Christ and the Apostles. The qualifications of the witnesses to mediæval and patristic marvels cannot for a moment be compared to those possessed by the disciples of Jesus. Any one may see this who will take the trouble to read the contemporary lives of Saint Francis. Once more, the Gospel miracles were none of them merely tentative. There were not a few instances of miraculous cure connected with numerous failures, as in the case of the Jansenist miracles, referred to by Hume.

\* I. Cor. xv. 1-8.

† For a more detailed discussion of the credibility of the miracles, see my article in the "Princeton Review," Jan., 1881.

Had this been the fact, vigilant enemies would have blazoned it abroad at once. I do not dwell on the grotesque character of the ecclesiastical miracles as a class, in comparison with the dignity of those narrated in the Gospels; nor do I touch on other points of disparity which put credulous chroniclers of antiquity and of the Middle Ages in an utterly diverse category as regards trustworthiness from that held by the founders and first teachers of the Christian religion.

Thus far I have spoken of miracles without specially considering the origin of the Gospels. That we have in these narratives the testimony substantially, to say the least, as it was given by the Apostles, there is no valid reason to doubt. To begin with the manuscripts. The allegation that because we have not the original documents we do not know whether the copies extant are not falsified, can only come from sheer ignorance. It is impossible to account for the agreement of the manuscripts which exist, including the most ancient Uncials,—to make no account here of the minor diversities which give occasion for textual criticism,—without concluding that they correspond to the original compositions, and to the copies in use in the life-time of the authors.\* It is a sufficient answer to illiterate objections of this sort that we have better proofs of the integrity of the Gospels than of any other ancient writings. They were in use by numerous widely scattered societies. These could not have conspired, had they been so disposed, to corrupt the text. They appeared in early translations, as the Peshito, or Syrian, and the Old Italic, the basis, in part, of the Vulgate. They are quoted by a body of ancient ecclesiastical authors in the East and West. It is enough to say that if one questions the integrity of the Gospels, he ought never to quote a line of Homer, no complete manuscript of whom is older than the thirteenth century. He ought never to cite Marcus Aurelius, or Plato, or any other heathen sage. In truth, he should never refer to ancient history, for the bulk of our information respecting it is derived directly from ancient writers, whose autograph manuscripts perished long ago, and were documents concerning which we have generally far less evidence than we have respecting the writings of the New Testament.

\* For the proof in detail, see Norton's "Genuineness of the Gospels," or my article, "How the New Testament came down to us," in "Scribner's Monthly," February, 1881.



As to the authorship of the Gospels, I will state what I believe to be the outcome of sound and impartial critical study. The second Gospel, which many now think to have been the first written, is the work of Mark, who was for a time a companion of the Apostle Peter, and, perhaps, has transferred some part of that Apostle's vivacity to his pages. On the ground of a comparison of the contents of Mark and Matthew, some have contended that not quite all of the second Gospel in its present form emanated from Mark, but that a portion of the matter was, at an early day, added by some other hand. I see no good reason for this opinion. There are no traces of a proto-Mark in antiquity. The second Gospel and the Book of Acts were written by a Gentile Christian, who journeyed for a time with the Apostle Paul, and whose affirmation that he had gathered his knowledge of the words and actions of Christ from eye-witnesses, is entitled to full credit. The first Gospel is ascribed to Matthew by the early Christian writers without dissent, although it is said to have been first written in the Hebrew language, and it is thought now to have received some additional matter from the early disciple, whoever he was, who transferred it into Greek. It existed in Greek at the date when it is spoken of by Papias, a contemporary of the Apostle John. There is internal evidence which, in my judgment, is of a most convincing character, that these three Gospels existed in their present form about A. D. 70, or when some of the Apostles, and a multitude whom they had taught, were still living. The genuineness of the Gospel of John has been of late persistently, but, as I think, unsuccessfully assailed. If there are difficulties connected with the supposition of its genuineness, there are far greater difficulties attending the opposite hypothesis. Only one fact belonging to the external evidence may here be given. Irenæus, a man of unquestioned probability, Bishop of Lyons in the latter part of the second century, by whom, as by all of his contemporaries, the Fourth Gospel was received without doubt or question, had personally known in the East the Martyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, and had heard him describe the appearance and manners of the Apostle John, whom Polycarp had personally known at Ephesus, where the Apostle spent his closing years. It is morally impossible that Irenæus received a Gospel as from John which Polycarp knew nothing of, or that Polycarp could have been mistaken on a point like this.

When all the literary evidence is scanned, and all the collateral proofs weighed, the conclusion will be that we have presented to us in the Gospels the story which the Apostles told of what they had seen and heard in their intercourse with Jesus. In these in-artificial narratives the testimony of the original Disciples is fairly laid before us.

The question recurs, are the Apostles to be believed? If not, shall we say that they are knaves, or that they are fools? The idea of their being knaves who were so anxious to become "the offscouring of all things" that they made up a lie—made up a lie for the pleasure of dying for it—this idea is happily obsolete. But were they fools? Were they half-crazed enthusiasts who imagined that they saw such things as the cure of the leper, after the Sermon on the Mount, or the stopping of the bier at Nain, and the raising from the dead of the Widow's son, when no such things occurred? Did Jesus, then, who is lauded as a great reformer, as one who knew human nature, a teacher of pre-eminent wisdom, select a band of fools for his chosen companions, to make up his family? And did he choose them for the express purpose of observing what He should say and do, that they might go forth and relate it to others? In what light does this theory place Christ? Turn to the narratives: were there ever stronger marks of truth? Artless, with no effort to parry objections, or anticipate cavils, the manner of the writers is that of honest men. The narrative given by the Apostles is objective; they are taken up in the subject matter; they are oblivious of the bearing of what they relate on their own repute; they tell their own faults, their own unfaithfulness to Christ, their cowardice, treachery, desertion. They set down the sharp rebukes which they received from his lips. There is no effort at concealment, nor is there any trace of exaggeration. There are none of the exclamations of wonder, none of the expletives and asseverations which belong to fictitious testimony. All is simple, unadorned, marked with the unmistakable signs of truthfulness. These are witnesses before whose eyes great and wonderful things have passed,—so great and wonderful that in the presence of them all personal considerations are lost out of sight. If the portrait which they incidentally present of Jesus in his transcendent purity and goodness—a portrait in which Divine authority, and power above that of men, are strangely yet inseparably mingled with human meekness and sympathy—does not correspond to a reality which they had seen

and known, then who gave to these unpracticed authors, to these apostolic witnesses, destitute of artistic skill, the ability to produce such a marvelous creation of fancy? If this be, indeed, their creation, let us worship them!

7. What shall be said of the objection to the credibility of the Gospels from alleged discrepancies? The first thing to be said is that the objection is irrelevant. Discrepancies and inaccuracies belong to almost all testimony. On the principle that a witness or an author is to be discredited if he fails of accuracy in all particulars, it would be impossible to believe anything. Courts of law would have to be shut up. All books of history, including narratives written from personal observation,—much more, such as are based on them,—would be worthless. Paley, one of the ablest defenders of Christianity in the last century, justly says: “I know not a more rash or unphilosophical conduct of the understanding than to reject the substance of a story, by reason of some diversity in the circumstances with which it is related. The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of justice teaches. When accounts of a transaction come from the mouths of different witnesses, it is seldom that it is not possible to pick out apparent or real inconsistencies between them. These inconsistencies are studiously displayed by an adverse pleader, but oftentimes with little impression upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a close and minute agreement induces the suspicion of confederacy and fraud.” Contemporary historians, although honest and painstaking, usually fail to accord with one another in some particulars of the narrative. They may differ as regards quite important circumstances, and yet their general credibility not be shaken. The accounts of the assassination of Julius Cæsar contain numerous discrepancies; so it is with the ancient narratives of the murder of Cicero. Yet Cæsar and Cicero were killed, and the main circumstances can be well ascertained, and even minor particulars arrived at, by a comparison of authorities. Some maintain that Colonel Prescott commanded at Bunker Hill; others that General Putnam was in the chief command. However the question may be determined, or if it cannot be determined, there is no doubt that a conflict occurred there, and no doubt as to the essential facts. Macaulay’s history of England is not made worthless because he confounded William Penn, the Quaker, with George Penn, the pardon-broker.

Where variations occur in testimony, or inaccuracies in any single witness or reporter, the only question is whether they are of such a number and character as to destroy the general trustworthiness of the narrators, and to cast doubt on the substantial contents of their tale. If not, they may furnish material for a pettifogger to deal with, but they will have no weight with a discerning judge or an intelligent critic.

Applying these principles to the Evangelists, we shall find that their general credibility is rather confirmed than weakened by the blemishes alleged to exist in their narratives. It is true that Strauss and critics of that stamp have tried to break down this testimony by making a parade of verbal differences, and by opposing a clause taken from one author against a clause picked out of another. It is true of Strauss, as of many others, that he reasons often in a circle, impeaching one author on account of the statement of another whom he likewise impeaches. The method, as thus pursued, is a sophistical one, and is parallel to instances of artificial harmonizing which well-meaning but ill-judging defenders of the Gospels have sometimes resorted to in order to remove real or apparent inconsistencies. Our historian, Mr. Prescott, began to read Strauss, but soon laid aside the book on account of the false and unfair method which marks the discussion,—a method subversive of the canons of sound historical criticism.

Whatever opinion is entertained on the question whether the narrations in the Gospel histories admit of being reconciled in all particulars,—a question on which Christian scholars are still divided,—it can be clearly shown that in numerous instances where it has been pretended that contradictions exist, this opinion is erroneous. It must be remembered that these books are not formal histories. They are memoirs. There is no aim at completeness. They are not from the pen of expert writers. Circumstances, even very important facts, may be left out of one and recorded by another. In narratives of this character, whether oral or written, there is often an appearance of inconsistency where some additional circumstance not introduced would at once dispel this appearance. One has only to observe the narratives of daily occurrences as they are given by one's friends who are possessed of an average degree of accuracy, to discern the fallacy and unfairness of much of the adverse criticism of the Gospels. But, as I have intimated above, if no

single transaction were described by any two Evangelists, either in precise agreement with one another, or in precise correspondence to the facts, no inference could be drawn against the substantial truthfulness of their narratives. The fact would compel a modification of a conception of inspiration which many entertain, but would leave the essential facts in the life of Jesus, his miracles and resurrection included, untouched.

8. We leave the Gospel history to glance at Christianity on the doctrinal side. Christianity is the religion of redemption. It rests on the presupposition of Theism, and stands or falls with it. The being of God being acknowledged, the one postulate of Christianity is the doctrine of sin. In affirming that sin is a dominating principle, or in declaring the general sinfulness of mankind, the Gospel brings forward a truth made evident by the individual's personal consciousness and observation, implied in the laws, customs, languages, and literature of the world, and manifested in the entire history of the race. Christianity does not create moral evil. On this subject of human wickedness it does nothing more than reiterate what the foremost of heathen poets and philosophers have united in asserting. Seneca is as severe in the accusation which he brings against mankind as Paul, though the Stoic's moral abhorrence of the guilt which he denounces is less intense. Those who find fault with Christian teaching seldom avoid implying a prevalence of sin which they will not consent explicitly to allow. We hear them call slavery "a hideous crime," the sum of abominations. But slavery, up to a recent day, has existed almost everywhere, and in all ages. The class of oppressors who are directly responsible for it have been strong enough and numerous enough to hold their victims in subjection. It has commonly been true that the slave has been ready, at any time, to take, when he could, the position of a master. Mankind, then, have been engaged, from the dawn of history, in the perpetration of what is termed a hideous crime. Wars of conquest are denounced as flagrantly wicked. But war has been the great business of the race, and no homage, no honors, no rewards have been so great as those bestowed on the conqueror. What are generally deemed the purest religions are charged with having incorporated into their sacred books, their creed and rites, features indicative of the direst cruelty. What must be the moral condition of a race whose theology and worship are said to be the offspring of cruel and vindictive passions?



Christianity broaches no new doctrine when it teaches that moral unworthiness belongs, though in different degrees, to men in common; that evil-doing is the habit of the race, though responsibility and guilt are personal. If there be a mystery in the universality of sin, viewed in connection with personal agency as its necessary source, and the condition, *sine quâ non*, of its guilt, it is not a mystery which the Gospel originates. It inheres in the facts, which are as patent to the enlightened heathen as to the Christian, and stare every man in the face. Christianity brings out in a clear light the identity of sin as a principle, although Stoicism was not blind to this truth. Unrighteous anger is not literally murder; but it is, in a minor degree, the same evil which in murder appears full-grown. It is murder in the germ. Ambition is not avarice; but both are alike selfish. Take what specific form it may, sin is a violation of righteous law, a disregard of rightful authority, a preference of a narrow interest to the universal good. All moral obligations are so bound together that he who offends in one point is guilty of all. Law is one, and Love is one, and Love is the Law. Christianity, as it recognizes the love of God as the first and supreme duty, traces all special forms of excessive self-love and evil-doing to the separation of man from communion with God. Here is the *fons et origo malorum*. In the void created in the human soul by the renunciation and loss of God, all idolatries have their origin; not merely the worship of deities devised by the imagination, but the idolatry of the world—the inordinate love of pleasure, power, fame, wealth. Ethics has the springs of its life in religion. Morality, divorced from religion, is a plant cut off from its root. It may retain its freshness and fragrance for a time, but in time it withers and perishes. This idea of the moral and spiritual life of man as having their living source in man's fellowship with God, in whom he lives, is one pervading idea of the Bible. It is a vital bond between the Old Testament and the New. It makes Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the worshipers of God in the old time, even when their ethical development was as crude and imperfect as their agriculture or architecture, of one company with John and Paul and the holiest of Christian saints. Christianity has no hope for mankind, whether as individuals or communities, except in the return of mankind to God. It looks on men who stand in no relation of affectionate loyalty to God as wasting their substance in a far country, and summons them

back to the Father's house. Christianity is for sinners. "They that are whole need no physician." He who will think earnestly enough to grasp, in its full reality, the fact of sin, is prepared at least to understand Christianity.

Communion with God is mediated and restored through Jesus Christ. He is sent to save that which was lost. He came not to fulminate a deserved sentence of condemnation; He came not to condemn, but to save the world. His function is to break down walls of separation, the separation of men from each other, the alienation of mankind from God. No work so sublime was ever undertaken on the earth. It is to form a universal society, the bond of which is Love. It is to organize a spiritual community, embracing the race of man, and having its center in Himself; a society to be trained for a future and perfect development of human nature in an immortal state. He who is to effect the reunion of man to God is himself the Son of God as well as the Son of Man. There is a mysterious community of being with the Father, an inscrutable derivation distinct from that of all creaturely existences, of which the human relation of sonship is to finite apprehension the most expressive symbol. There is an incarnation, a great act of self-sacrifice. That nature of the Deity which is called in the technical language of theology the Trinity, is a mysterious truth. That is, it is a truth with regard to which we know *that* it is, also to a certain extent *what* it is, but not *how* it is. We know that a plant grows from the seed; we know *that* it grows, but very imperfectly *how* it grows. We know that bodies attract each other in the inverse ratio of the square of their distances. We know that a result takes place, but not in the least *how* it takes place: "attraction" is a figure of speech. So of the connection of soul and body, and of a thousand other things. So true is it that *omne exit in mysterium*. We may know that two attributes co-exist in an entity, but *how* they do or can we may be ignorant. A mysterious truth may be clear in its practical relations. It is thus with the divine sonship of Christ. Endowed with all human sensibilities, exposed to temptation, He devotes Himself, in obedience to the will of God, to the task of bearing witness for Him, and with an absorbing sympathy to the work of bringing men to repentance. In the prosecution of this work His love to God and man, though always without flaw, is developed, in the experiences of life and of death, to an absolute perfection. On the

cross, he partakes of death, the wages of sin, and through the absolute self-devotion of sympathy attains to such a living apprehension of man's guilt and ill-desert, and of the condemnation of sin felt in the divine mind, that through the cross the communion between Him, and between mankind as represented in Him, and the holy and loving God reaches its consummation. It is a communion in which there is a full, intelligent sanction, on man's side, of the justice of God in the penal allotment of death, and in His righteous displeasure at sin. Thus in Christ, as a center, communion between God and man was restored. In the case of all who enter into the work of Christ with sympathy, which is a work done not for Himself but for his fellow-men, there is a guaranty that pardon will not be mistaken for indulgence. There is a guaranty that from Him will go forth upon those who give up their isolated individuality, and seek for a new life in fellowship with Him, an influence adequate not only to implant and sustain a filial allegiance to God, but to infuse into conscience a sense of His holy anger at sin, as vivid as if they had themselves been visited with the punishment due to their sins. It is not strange if there should be questions respecting the Atonement which neither man nor angel can answer. To say that the Atonement makes God placable is false. "He so loved the world," etc. It is no bribe to an unmerciful judge. It is not a commercial transaction, a price paid for a dispensation of pardon. It is a substitute for punishment, embracing in it certain elements of punishment itself, and doing for the satisfaction of God's own feeling, for the moral order disturbed by the violation of law, and thus for the protection of authority and the prevention of transgressions in the future, a work like that which the infliction of the curse threatened by conscience and the law would fulfill. As to the vicarious feature of the Atonement, its analogies are seen wherever we look,—in families and the succession of generations, in the entailment of evils and blessings, and even in material nature all around us where life springs out of death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, it abideth alone." The call for an unconditioned absolution, with no correlated work for the manifestation and vindication of justice, is not a call that comes up from the human soul when it is deeply penetrated with a sense of guilt. Criminals, when their consciences have been aroused, and they have been struck with the iniquity of their deeds, have preferred to

suffer the penalty. When a terrible crime is committed, which spreads grief and dismay through a nation, men demand, if the perpetrator was sane and responsible, that the penalty should be inflicted in its full severity. This demand springs not merely or chiefly from a regard for public safety; it is the voice of nature asserting an eternal fitness of things. Who dare say, then, that if sin is remitted, if the transgressor is approached with offers of forgiveness, that there ought not to be a corresponding revelation of the sanctities of justice? Who dare say that the process of reconciliation ought not to include something of the nature of expiation? It is easy to caricature these things. It is easy to paint the righteous anger of God against evil-doing as a personal feeling, a passion, instead of the holy, impersonal sentiment of conscience. It is easy to represent the Atonement as suffering imposed on the innocent One, when it was suffering voluntarily assumed and endured by Him. There is no element in the Atonement which may not be distorted by ignorance or by prejudice. Against all theoretical objections, there is the fact that millions of human beings have found in it a reconciliation to God in which nothing of His fatherly character is obscured, while the perception of the guilt and peril of sin has been increasingly deepened instead of being dulled.

By the moral victory achieved on the cross there was a liberation from death. When sin was expelled from human nature in the person of the Representative of mankind, who thereby stored up in Himself a potency of spiritual life, of holiness and goodness, for the race of which he was the head, or the second Adam, the resurrection was a normal consequence. Set free from the limitations of space and time, while retaining all human sympathies and the fruits of a human experience perfected on the cross, He can act from the spiritual sphere with a more wide-spread efficiency. He is the herald, the type, the author of a perfected humanity. The kingdom of God, in consequence of the glorified form of being which belongs to its Head, attains to its universal form, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, and in which neither to Jerusalem nor Mount Gerizim is it needful to resort for the worship of the Father. How sublime is the progress of that kingdom! We can trace it back to the remote age when a single nomad chief, having a living faith in the true God, broke away from his home and kindred, and wandered over the hills of Palestine. We can look on it

many centuries later, when it was threatened with complete destruction by colossal empires on its borders, when its narrow strip of territory was trampled down by their invading armies, when its people were deported in a mass to foreign lands to serve heathen masters, when it seemed on the verge of utter extinction, but when, even in the darkest hours, its prophets proclaimed that it would rise from the dust and would overspread the whole earth. We behold it in the final stage of its development, when the predicted King, with only a handful of Galilean peasants for his followers, declared that against it the powers of Hades—the powers of death and destruction which swallow up everything earthly—should never prevail. We observe the kingdom growing as from a grain of mustard-seed, diffusing its power as leaven hidden in measures of meal, traveling from land to land, supplanting ancient religions, surviving, in full vigor, the rise and fall of nations. We open the New Testament and find that “it breathes in every page boundless hope for the future, together with the charity which is the source of social effort, and with the faith which carries each man beyond the sensual objects of his own short life. And it closes with that splendid vision of the consummation of all Christian effort in the perfect reign of God on earth, from which folly attempts to cast, like an astrologer, the horoscope of nations; but which is in truth the last voice of Christianity, as it passes from the hands of the Apostles and commits itself to the dark and dangerous tide of human affairs, breaking forth in the assurance of final victory.” Where, save in Christianity, is there a prospect of a grand and inspiring future for man on earth? Where else is an antidote to the pessimism which creeps into the modern mind when it turns away from Christian Revelation? What is there to kindle enthusiasm in Stoic or Agnostic anticipations of an approaching resolution of all things into chaos, to be followed by new cycles of development in endless and aimless succession? Say not that the kingdom of God is to be explained by a “Semitic genius for monotheism.” It is a historical blunder. What was the monotheism of Assyrian, and Babylonian, and Phenician, of the devotee of Baal, of Astarte, of Moloch? And Mohammedanism was the old Abrahamic theism, partly inherited and partly caught up from Judaism and a degenerate Christianity. Hebrew monotheism was no result of mere natural instinct; it won for itself a footing and a permanent life only through arduous



conflict with tendencies to polytheism and idolatry. The native Semitic tendency may be seen in the unspeakable abominations of the Chaldean ritual, which were escaped by Abraham when he left his father, who even then had begun "to worship other gods." The proposed offering up of Isaac was not unlikely the turning-point where he cast behind him the idea of immolating human victims on the altar, one of the horrible features of worship in Babylon and Tyre.

There ought to be no need of contending for the reasonableness of the Christian doctrine of the influence of the Spirit of God upon the human soul. With the idea of a divine influence upon the minds of men heathen antiquity found no difficulty. The analogies of a quickening, elevating, renovating power, superadded to definite instruction, and going forth from person to person, are familiar. Inquiries into the relation of the Spirit's influence to the free agency of the human will are only one branch of a problem which belongs as much to philosophy as to theology. They present no greater embarrassment in the matter of religion than in connection with any other department of human agency. Arguments for fatalism, such as they are, sweep over the entire field of voluntary activity. The consistency of free-will and responsibility with the efficacy of inducements is as capable of vindication when repentance and conversion are the results produced as when it is the building of a house or the marrying of a wife.

The Christian conception of God includes that which is positive in Deism and Pantheism, excluding that which is negative and one-sided. Spinoza, in his affirmations, is not so far wrong, nor is Emerson, in his essay on "The Over-soul." The difference between the Deistic and Pantheistic idea on the one hand, and the Christian idea on the other, is the difference between a hemisphere and a globe. For Christianity, at the same time that it teaches the immanence of God in the world, and His all-pervading energy, likewise holds fast to His transcendence. It saves thus the personality of God and the free activity of man, both of which are essential to religion, religion being the communion of person with person. Christianity, in distinction from the religions and philosophies of heathenism, affirms creation, and denies every species of Dualism, thereby consistently maintaining that God is an absolute being, a being not

depending on anything beyond Himself for the realization of His essential attributes.

It is impossible for the human mind to entertain a more exalted notion of the character of God than Christianity presents in the fore-front of its teaching. God is Love. This is not the assertion of the Apostle John alone. Whoever thinks that Paul did not cherish a similar idea will disabuse his mind of this false impression by reading the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Such is the teaching of Christ. "The bruised reed He will not break," etc. The mission of Christ is founded on the love and compassion of God toward evil-doers, toward those inimical to Him. The Old Testament Scriptures, in which law and justice are made prominent as a prerequisite in the moral education of man for the Gospel of forgiveness, dwell, also, on the love of God. He is "long-suffering," "plenteous in mercy," feeling toward all who revere Him a father's pity for his children, "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Nevertheless, throughout the Scriptures, it is a *holy* Love which is predicated of God. Love is of necessity holy. Love infolds in itself hatred. It is impossible to love one thing without hating its moral opposite. He who loves the well-being of men must proportionately hate that which is fatal to man's well-being. He who is benevolent cannot avoid recoiling with abhorrence from malevolence and selfishness. That love of right is spurious the obverse side of which is not the detestation of wrong. The Great Teacher, therefore, in conformity with prophets and apostles, sets forth the righteous anger of God against sin—a displeasure which expresses itself in the divine administration of the world. This aspect of the character of God and of His government is not a proper object for concealment or apology; from beginning to end of the Bible, He is represented as tenderly meeting every penitent, as giving a welcome to the repenting soul like that of the father in the parable to the Prodigal Son who "had wasted his living among harlots." "Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." At the same time, toward the impenitent who persist in trampling on sacred obligations, obligations which bind together the moral system, as gravitation holds together the physical, He presents Himself in the character of a Judge who will "by no means clear the guilty." It is "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil," but "glory, honor, and

peace to every man that worketh good." Whoever cannot endure this character, whoever wants an indiscriminate lenity or indulgence, or no divine government at all, may as well turn away from Christianity at once. He will not be able to read a page in the New Testament or the Old with any satisfaction. But when Christianity points out the unsparing righteousness of God in the infliction of penal evil, it goes no farther than the observation of the course of things among men warrants us in believing. We see enough to make the Christian doctrine credible. There are laws of character. Habits tend to irreversible permanence. There is a bondage under evil; and self-emancipation, or deliverance by any exterior influences, grows more and more difficult. Choice turns into a chain. Conscience cannot easily shake off the presentiment of retribution to be met with in "the undiscovered country." On this subject, Christianity teaches, in the first place, that it is necessary for any true or blessed life that man should be reconciled and reunited to God. This is a fundamental assertion; Christianity stands or falls with it. In the second place, Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ is the only means to this end, or the only Saviour. It is through Him, or on the foundation of what He does and suffers, that those who have no personal knowledge of Him, in case they are ever brought into relations of conscious peace and fellowship with God, are delivered. The whole family of the redeemed are to stand in connection with Him. Thirdly, Christianity teaches, as a corollary to the foregoing proposition, that the final rejection of the Saviour by those to whom He is made known, leaves the soul without the hope of salvation. It is a self-evident truth that when there is only one means of salvation, perdition is the consequence of a persevering refusal to avail oneself of it. Such refusal is a voluntary act of self-destruction. Most Christians understand the New Testament to predict that there are those who will thus repel the approaches of mercy and help, and thus bring on themselves an endless doom,—endless from the fixity of habit, and their own irrevocable action, yet not the less penalty, since the law of habit is itself an apparatus not only of reward, but of retribution. There have been some eminent teachers of Christianity in ancient and in modern times who have dissented from the prevailing interpretation of the Scriptures. Some have thought that eventually the attractive power of God's love in the Gospel will overcome all the opposition of the human will, pour light and warmth into

the darkest mind, and bring to pass a universal restoration. Others, especially in later days, have believed that intimations in the New Testament, coupled with observed tendencies of sin, justify the expectation that incorrigible souls will wear themselves out, consume their own powers of rational thought, and perish out of being. But all considerate Christians, be their opinions or doubts what they may, are bound to protest with all energy against any theory of fatalism which would attribute to sin a self-destroying character. The Pantheism which makes moral evil a phase of good, a transient phenomenon that eliminates itself, is in deadly hostility to the essential spirit of the Christian religion. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil." Sin is self-propagating, not self-consuming. He who ventures to indulge the hope of a final recovery of all souls to holiness and to God has no moral right to the Christian name if he founds his hope on any natural necessity, or on aught save the moral operation of motives which exert over the will no coercive agency. Perhaps the day will come when controversy on this subject will be less heated, and when a more chastened curiosity will exist respecting the statistics of the future world in its far remote eons.

As concerns the problem of the theodicy, the difficulty presented to Christian theology is precisely the same as under every other religion or philosophy in which the reality of moral evil is not denied, and in which the Power that rules the world is neither conceived of as finite, or as deficient in benevolence. Physical and moral evil are here. We see and experience them both. They are permitted to be by the Author of the universe. The reasons why they are permitted we are for the most part left to conjecture. Since the masterly discussion of Leibnitz, the objection to the perfection of God from the existence of physical evil or suffering has been more seldom heard. On the supposition that moral evil is to exist, the existence of physical evil, where and when it is found, may be, for aught that anybody can prove to the contrary, beneficent. Moral evil or sin is purely the act of the creature. It is an abuse of freedom. It is overruled in the divine government, and turned into an occasion of multiform benefits which do not issue from its inherent tendencies, and were not designed by the evil-doer. The question why it is allowed to be introduced by the all-foreseeing Deity is among the mysteries of life. But the objection of Epicurus and Hume can-

not logically be urged against the divine omnipotence. It can never be proved that the exclusion of sin in any of the cases where it is suffered to occur, by dint of divine power interfering to prevent it, does not involve an incompatibility in the nature of things. It can never be proved that in a universe composed of rational agents further divine interposition for the exclusion of sin might not necessarily involve a degradation of the system, a diminution of the good to result from it, greater than any advantages consequent on such interference. In other words, the permission, not the causation, of sin on the part of God may be the dictate of supreme wisdom. It is not a Christian philosophy which teaches that two and two may be five on some other planet, or that omnipotence can make a thing to be and not to be simultaneously, or achieve any other impossibilities. As long as this solution of the mystery of evil is a *possible* one, the impeachment of the divine power or goodness has no logical foundation to rest upon. It is a subject on which all but the most presumptuous will be willing to wait for light. Meantime, Christianity stands immeasurably above the ripest heathen philosophy in ascribing sin to the self-determination of the creaturely will, instead of making it the necessary product of matter, or of any germ inherent in the constitution of things.

Protestant Christians hold the Bible to be the sufficient and authoritative rule of faith and conduct. The Scriptures are the umpire in controversies. But it is to the Scriptures collectively taken that these attributes pertain. We cannot open the book of Leviticus, or any other book of the Old Testament, and apply forthwith a precept which falls under the eye to ourselves. We cannot select a verse in a Psalm and adopt it without consideration as a sentiment suitable for a Christian to cherish. The Old Testament Scriptures are not Christian Scriptures. They belong to the earlier stages of Revelation. The criterion to which every utterance, even of the most evangelical prophets, is to be brought is the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. This truth derogates nothing from the proper dignity of the Old Testament Scriptures, nor does it clash with any reasonable idea of Inspiration. It is simply an inference from the progressive character of revelation, on which I have before commented. An illustration resembling one which Whately has somewhere presented may be of service. A father corresponds with an absent



son from his childhood. The earliest of these letters will naturally contain injunctions and counsels adapted to the situation, needs, and temptations peculiar to a boy. He is exhorted, perhaps, to set apart a definite hour for play, and a particular time for writing his letters. He is enjoined to retire to bed at nine o'clock in the evening. Particular regulations are laid down relative to his clothing and his expenses. The letters for a number of years are composed largely of rules of behavior, affectionately yet imperatively urged, and interspersed with that sort of instruction in morals and religion which would be most easily apprehended by an immature mind. At length the son arrives at the stage of manhood, and shows the molding agency of this long-continued guidance. Then the father addresses him as a full-grown man, and communicates to him in one final composition the principles pertaining to life, duty, and man's destiny, which he deems of the highest moment. The son collects all these letters in a volume. They all discover in different degrees his father's character, and throw light on the path of his duty. But he would be a simpleton if he referred to the earliest and latest without discrimination, and confounded the injunctions given to a school-boy with the truths and appeals of that final letter. Rather would he test everything previous by the contents of this last communication. The illustration will mislead if it is understood to imply that the books of the Bible are to be literally described as letters from God to man. The point is simply that the progressive nature of Revelation renders it necessary, as it is natural, to use the New Testament as the touchstone of the relative completeness and the continued validity of all prior Biblical teaching. It requires to be further said that, from this gradually developing nature of Revelation, devotional expressions, current proverbs, and the varied expressions of a religious and ethical character, whether verbal or in the conduct of good men, will bear upon them traces of the limit of the knowledge possessed at different epochs. There is an Old Testament type of piety which is felt in all this literature. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The critical study of the Bible, coupled with the general advance of physical and historical investigation, have brought out, in recent times, in more distinct relief what is called the

“human side,” or factor, in the Biblical writings. Scholarly criticism tends to the conclusion that there was a growth in Hebrew institutions and laws; that the codes were kept open, the original rubrics being retained; that legislation was added, from time to time, under the guidance of prophets, to suit changing circumstances, new ordinances being looked on as Mosaic for the reason that they were conceived in the spirit and were considered a legitimate development of the primitive enactments. These questions are to be determined before the tribunal of searching and impartial scholarship. But they involve no such peril to the Christian faith as they are often thought to contain. The religion of the Chosen People is all within the covers of the Old Testament. The debate is about the order of stratification. The organic relation of the Old Testament religion to Christianity is a historical fact which stands on indisputable proof, and is altogether independent of these critical inquiries, however important in their place they may be. Of the Scriptures as a whole, it is true that the more they are studied in the light of modern science and learning, the more striking is felt to be the Apostle’s declaration: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the power may be of God and not of men.” The *power* remains. The treasure is more evident from the homely casket which surrounds it. Traditional formulas relative to Inspiration may undergo modification; they are not an integral element of the Christian religion, but belong to the attempts of scientific thought to define it. The great Protestant principle of the normal authority of the Bible as a teacher of religion and morals remains intact. What Christianity is can be correctly ascertained from the Scriptures, and nowhere else. The marks of inspiration are stamped even on parts of Scripture which precede contemporary authorship and testimony—the one main criterion of historical proof. The attempted “reconciliations” of Genesis and science may not be happy, either as expositions of science or interpretations of literature; but the sublime cosmogony which stands at the threshold of the Bible, the moment it is contrasted with the ancient Semitic traditions or legends, Assyrian, Babylonian, or Phœnician, with which it has features in common, is perceived to be immeasurably elevated above them. How came polytheism and dualism to be excluded here and not elsewhere? How did the pure theism, with its doctrine of a Creator of man in

His own image, of sin as man's free act, of guilt bringing shame, of immorality and crime as flowing from practical atheism,—how did this mass of religious and moral truth, truth recognized throughout the Bible, and at the foundation of the Christian system, *get into* this Hebrew record? Who can fail to see that a Spirit was at work in the Hebrew mind not manifested elsewhere? As the magnet attracts only true metal, so did that mind, when moved by the Spirit of God, take up only those elements of belief which were consonant with the true religion. Books in the Old Testament which are a puzzle to some Christians, and are often a theme of derision, assume an utterly different character when they are considered from what I may call the historico-theological point of view. The Song of Solomon contains—except in one passage (chap. vii. 1–9), which is an interpolation—nothing to which a pure mind can take exception. Instead of being marked by a sensual quality, as has often been asserted, it celebrates the virtue and victory of chaste love and constancy against all enticements. There is not a syllable in the Bible, from Genesis to the Apocrypha, which is adapted to foster impure passion. Those who are fond of contrasting the Old Testament with the New, as if there were a contrariety between them, must find it hard to explain how the Old Testament could have been so cherished by Christ and the Apostles. Why were they not shocked by what we are told is hostile to the spirit of Christianity? It is plain that the drift of the Old Testament is all in the right direction. The book of Jonah—whether it be held that it was meant to be history, or was meant as a parable, like the tale of the Pharisee and the Publican, as many Christian scholars hold—contains a beautiful lesson of Jehovah's pity for the heathen, and affords a foreglimpse of the broader discovery of God's love which is made in the Gospel. It is a rebuke of Jewish narrowness and harshness; it really marks an advance in Revelation. The Proverbs are an anthology of wise sayings by Solomon and other sages, as the Psalms are an anthology of hymns by David and other poets. They are differentiated, as I have said before, from heathen literature: another spirit dwells in them. Only they must be tested by Christianity, which is the complement of all prior revelations.

The Gospel was brought into the world in a way to pour contempt on human pride. There is no pomp of any sort attend-

ing its advent. Humble, unlearned men are chosen for its first teachers. The Lord Himself was in the form of a servant. The New Testament Scriptures are in keeping with the lowly circumstances that invested Christianity at its origin. They, too, from the ordinary point of view of the world, "are without form or comeliness." They are not elaborate compositions. No pains are taken to disarm prejudice, anticipate cavils and objections, frame a case all parts of which are nicely fitted together to defy attack. Attacks are expected. They are predicted. The divine Author of Christianity has rather chosen to leave much in the Christian documents that may easily provoke disesteem and even skepticism. A test is presented of the candor, the earnestness, and, above all, of the real desire to find God, and to obtain forgiveness and peace from Him.

There is room for brief observations on the Ethics of Christianity. It is never to be forgotten that Christianity is in its essence a religion. Its end is a transformation of character. It aims to make man "a new creature" by connecting him with Christ, the herald, the type, and the creative potency of a perfected humanity. It inculcates principles rather than specific statutes for the regulation of conduct. It is sometimes said that the Golden Rule is not peculiar to the Gospel. As found in Isocrates, Confucius, the Rabbis, and in other authors where it is alleged to occur, it appears either in a negative form—"Do not unto others," etc.; or in some restricted application, as to the relation of husbands, fathers, or children. In the Gospel it stands in a form at once affirmative and universal. But even if an equivalent injunction were to be met with elsewhere, it would be more pertinent to show where, save in Christianity, there has been provided an efficient motive and inspiration to its fulfillment. Moreover, this precept is far from being an adequate guide of life, when severed from the Christian truth connected with it. The rule to treat others as we should wish to be treated ourselves, or even as we should think it right for others to treat us, requires as its complement a true idea of man as he ought to be. We must know in what man's well-being consists. What ought we to desire at the hands of others? The Golden Rule is simply to brace men up on the weak side. It is to counteract the bias of self-love, the most prolific source of injustice and unkindness. This is the limit of its function. It is one of those parts of New

Testament teaching which the natural conscience sanctions, if it fails to suggest.

The New Testament insists on general affections. It lays stress on philanthropy, because at that age there was no need to exhort men to patriotism. The tendency was to make love of country the acme of virtuous attainment. But Christianity never disparages particular affections, such as bind men together in families and communities. It simply guards against their exaggeration, and insists on a benevolence as broad as humanity.

It is a narrow and frigid method of interpretation which finds in the Sermon on the Mount a universal prohibition of the use of force. The precept of non-resistance is like that—which is a branch of it—enjoining that if a man is sued for his coat he is to give, unasked, his cloak also. In all such precepts, the thing forbidden is malice and revenge. The thing commanded, as the main reliance for the overcoming of evil, is the practice of forbearance and kindness. But the state, as an organization of force, existing by divine authority for the maintenance of justice, is sanctioned by Christ and the Apostles. Nor does the spirit of Christianity forbid the use of force for ends consonant with those for which the civil authority is established. The limit to the duty of civil obedience is where human law is in direct conflict with the divine. Then a Christian is to obey God rather than man. To conclude that there is an obligation of passive obedience in all conceivable cases, and no right of revolution, is an unwarrantable inference from injunctions given at a time when armed resistance to tyranny would have been a suicidal folly, and directed to those charged with a special mission to found, by persuasion and by patient suffering, the new kingdom of God among men.

9. The relation of Christianity to ethnic religions and to philosophy among the heathen is not that of unqualified repugnance. The “wild-growing religions,” as Schelling calls them, may have in them important elements of truth. These are found in their right place in the Christian system. In one religion, the teaching of Buddha, there is an impressive inculcation of sympathy and philanthropy. It is linked with a gloomy metaphysic which places the highest hope of the soul in the annihilation of personal being. That system, in its proper con-



sequences, is fatal to responsibility as well as to hope. All that is good in Buddhism is found in the Gospel, without its dismal accompaniment of atheism and the drowning of personality in a fathomless ocean of being. How infinitely richer is the good offered to the wretched victims of caste in the invitation of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"—words which Augustine says he had never found in Plato, high as he rated the charms of that prince of philosophers. Whatever in Greek philosophy or the uninspired sages of other peoples is true to human nature, Christianity welcomes as congenial with itself, and knows how to assimilate. Orthodox fathers of the ancient church did not hesitate to say that rays of light from above had fallen into the minds of Socrates and other masters of wisdom, who rose into a higher atmosphere than was breathed by the generations among whom their lot was cast—men of whom it might be said that heathen society "was not worthy." Stoicism yearned for a universal polity. As the ancient states, one after another, fell to pieces, there were those who aspired after a broader and permanent bond of union. Cicero, in a strain caught from those teachers, discourses of a universal "commonwealth" of gods and men. These were aspirations which could never be realized on the soil of heathen antiquity. They were dreams awaiting a fulfillment. They were unconscious prophecies of the brotherhood of mankind, secured in the fellowship of Jesus Christ, and of the Church, opening its doors to every nation and every rank.

It is, likewise, a part of the genius of Christianity to foster within its due limit every genuine expression of human nature, to encourage the development of the human mind, and the promotion of human welfare in all directions. Christianity seeks to mold society according to justice and love. It seeks to infuse into government and legislation the spirit of equity. It favors education and culture, because it values the human soul infinitely above every exterior good. It is friendly to art, for the love of beauty is allied to the love of goodness. Whatever inventions and discoveries lighten the burden of labor, minister to the healing of the sick, and heighten the comforts of daily existence, are welcomed by the followers of Him who went about doing good. Christianity is not an ascetic system. The kingdom of God on earth is not a ghostly community, busied exclu-

sively with religious exercises. It is humanity developed, trained, perfected on every side. Christian virtue is no "fugitive and cloistered virtue." "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," Christians are exhorted to pay regard to. The comprehensive command of Christ is, "Be ye perfect." Perfection is reached in the disciple as in Christ, not by "minding his own things," but "the things of others." To live and labor for the world, without worldliness—that is, subordinating all material good to that which is spiritual, and walking by faith in things not seen—is a Christian's work.

Let a thoughtful man contemplate the prospects of mankind on the supposition that the Christian faith is to pass away. Civilization advances. Human science goes forward as far as it can in alleviating bodily pain. Provisions for living comfortably are multiplied in a degree at present incalculable, and are diffused abroad. Knowledge increases more and more. Wars come to an end. Governments become equitable and beneficent. Manners take on a finer quality. Conceive that such a progress of mankind is possible, apart from the purifying and restraining influence of religion—an expectation for which neither human nature nor experience affords the slightest warrant—what then? Are men who are thus advanced in the intellectual scale and in the affections of the heart to be satisfied with a merely mundane existence? Can they content themselves to live in this way, with no wider horizon, and then to pass out of being? Will they find a sufficient stimulus to labor for their race in the mere hope of rendering the earth a more comfortable abode for tenants who in swift succession rise into being and sink into the grave, as flowers blossom and the next day fall from their stems? The further civilization advances, were a sure advance practicable without the inspiration and the safeguards of religion, the more intolerable human life would become. Man would be less happy than the animals. The brutes have no thoughts or imaginations above the necessities of the hour; but man, with a nature too large to be satisfied with earthly good, is cut off from anything higher. The dignity of life, and its joy not less, are gone when there are no ties connecting this brief existence with a world unseen.

I have spoken of Christianity, making no attempt to confute Atheism. It is **no** part of my plan to set forth the evidences of the being of God. He reveals Himself in the constitution of the human soul, a free intelligence, which cannot explain itself to itself by any material causes among which freedom has no place and intelligence does not exist. He reveals Himself in conscience, through which an imperative law is imposed on us, which is superior to the human will and independent of it. He reveals Himself in the order and design which render science possible, and which bring home to the unperverted mind the conviction that the world is framed and sustained by an intelligent Creator. He reveals Himself in the course of history, in the working out of ends by the concurrence of numberless instruments, neither of whom comprehends the plan which he takes part in executing, and in the traces of a righteous government which, amid all the confusion of human affairs, are clearly discerned, and which excite a rational presentiment of a more complete manifestation of justice hereafter. Nothing can be more irrational than criticism of the justice and goodness of the First Cause of all things; for that there is a First Cause few reasoners are so unphilosophical as to call in question. The Author of the universe is the author of the human faculties by which we judge of truth and falsehood, of good and evil. If He is not righteous, what reason have we to trust the faculties which he has given us? What ground have we to rely on any conclusion; and if not on any conclusion, how can we put confidence in impressions that we may have in regard to the Creator's attributes? Faith in God is the presupposition of faith in our own intellectual processes.

In the foregoing discussion I have endeavored to state the opinions of Christians correctly, wherever I have professed to refer to general or prevailing beliefs. In other cases I have expressed frankly my personal convictions. Christianity is the peculiar property of no individual and of no single sect. Whoever defends it or assails it has no right to confound peculiarities of doctrine found here or there among Christians, or even widely prevalent, with the catholic faith, or that great substance of belief, which Christians generally unite in cherishing. I have passed in rapid review a series of topics, to either of which a volume might well be devoted. If the effect is to give to any dis-

believer or doubter a more enlightened conception of the Religion of Christ, and to diminish prejudices which often spring from incorrect teaching, I shall feel that I have not written in vain. Should any one be moved to contradict statements in the preceding article, I shall not, partly for the reasons stated at the outset, feel obliged to make reply. I have no fear that candid readers will infer from my silence that the propositions which have been stated above admit of no further defense.

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